

NBA Finals: Celtics vs. Mavericks

Monday, June 17, 2024

Boston Celtics

Coach Joe Mazzulla

Game 5: Postgame

Boston Celtics 106, Dallas Mavericks 88

Q. Joe, I guess, first of all, you've been so intense throughout this whole thing. What does it feel like to accomplish the goal?

JOE MAZZULLA: It feels good. I think the most important thing, something that's really been going through my mind throughout this process, is you can't lose sight of the people that came before us.

And I want to make sure every person that's worked for the Celtics, that's played for the Celtics that didn't win, knows that their work and what they have done has not gone unnoticed or it doesn't play a part in where we are at today.

It can be so easy when you work for this organization and you don't win that the work that people put in just gets brushed over or gets ignored. And when I first got here, the staff, you know, Brad's coaching, the staff that they had, the foundation that they built with these guys when they were young, the foundation of what we have, is one of the reasons why we're here today.

So I think that's one of the first things that came to mind, was just because we won this doesn't mean what the people have done before us isn't just as important.

Q. The Payton shot, what did that mean for you guys?

JOE MAZZULLA: Oh, man.

Q. Did you put him in specifically for that?

JOE MAZZULLA: Yes. Payton is one of the best competitors and one of my favorite people in the world. Just the way he competes, the professionalism and just for his ability to take pride in stuff like that. He's really grown as a player this year to becoming a well-rounded player on both ends of the floor, and he won us games.

I think he won us moments. You know, as the playoffs go



on, obviously some patterns change and things change, but those guys have to win moments of games for you, and Payton did that twice for us. That is just as important as any other plays that happened throughout the series and in the playoffs alone. You know, I've got a huge heart for him.

Q. So much of what you believe in is sort of sticking with what you guys do and consistently doing it over and over again. What has it meant to you to see your group do that throughout the course of the season and come back from the way last year ended and cap it off the way you guys have tonight?

JOE MAZZULLA: It really starts with them. You can't have a philosophy or a way of playing if you don't have a group of guys that are willing to buy into it and be disciplined. Quite honestly, this group of guys has been through so much in the league, they know what it takes.

It's more about that. When you have a group of guys that have an understanding of what it takes, using the experiences that you've been through. And that, to me, is more than anything.

It was a joy watching the guys just grow as a team throughout the year but also like really work at it. Like, there's a group of guys in the locker room that decided they wanted to win day one, and credit to them.

Q. What did it mean to have Kristaps fight to get on the court and give you minutes?

JOE MAZZULLA: That was awesome. It's a huge credit to him. Like I said, I know he's been in and out in the playoffs, but he's worked his ass off to try and get in and play as much as he could.

It just says -- about the team, everyone is going to do whatever it takes to win. And even though he wasn't a hundred percent, he said he wanted to play, and he knew he could give us something. And I thought that the minutes he gave us were valuable. It speaks to who he is, and it speaks to the locker room.

Q. As you guys were putting up historical numbers in

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the regular season, as far as point differential efficiency and top two on both ends of the floor, how important was that to you as an analytical person in regards to checking boxes and building towards where you are now?

JOE MAZZULLA: I mean, those were actual numbers. We live in an expected world. So we didn't pay much attention to the actual numbers.

But to me it was just paying attention more to the process of what we were doing. And there were obviously some things that we had to improve upon from last year analytically to make up for some of the stuff that we lost. The guys bought into that.

So to me, it was just more of the process of making sure that we are playing the right way, making sure, you know, we are attacking the game analytically in the right way, but also having the open-mindedness and discipline to do some of the other stuff.

So I thought it was a good balance.

Q. You got the job under pretty crazy circumstances last season. You faced criticism. You had calls for your job even at times last year. How have these two seasons challenged you, changed you, and how have they rewarded you?

JOE MAZZULLA: I feel like it's going to be like that for the rest of my career, as it should be. I think just having an understanding that praise and criticism are both just as dangerous. And if you don't handle them well, and I think we talked about that as a team this year, like winning is just as dangerous as losing if you don't handle it well.

I think our guys handled winning the right way by, whether we won or lost, we just moved on to the next game.

And it's Boston. Like, we wouldn't want it any other way. I think the ownership and the responsibility to give back to the franchise, give back to the city, that's just part of it.

And so I think -- but you need it. Like, you need that. You need criticism. You need praise. You need expectations. All those things go into making who you are as a person, making who you are as people, as an organization.

So just having an understanding that they are never going to go away. If someone tells you "Good job," that's just as dangerous as someone telling you you suck. But you need both of them in order to get to where you want to get to, and there's no place else I'd rather be.