

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

Indiana Pacers

Tyrese Haliburton

Media Day



Q. Tyrese, it's kind of a two-part question. How does it feel to actually finally be here at the NBA Finals? Can you detail the last 24 hours? I know the plane got diverted from Tulsa because of the tornado.

TYRESE HALIBURTON: No, I'm excited to be here. Obviously, the Finals is a very special thing, something I wanted to be a part of my whole life. To be here means the world. I'm just taking it all in, soaking it all in. Really excited for this moment.

As far as yesterday, we took off, and I slept the whole plane ride, which I don't normally do. We landed, I was ready to get up. They said we were in Tulsa. We sat there for another hour. Then took off again. Felt like we were in the air for another hour and a half. What time did we land? 7:00? Normally like 8:00 back home. So, like a five-hour travel day. We might as well travel to Portland.

Yeah, it's a long travel day. What can you do? None of us can control the weather. There's worse problems in life. We'll be fine.

Q. You have faced some pretty talented point guards in the playoffs. You get another one here. When you watch Shai during the regular season, do you watch it as someone you might be competing against in a situation like this? Are you able to look at this game from a purely "I enjoy basketball" perspective? What are some of those thoughts you have when you watch him play?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I think all of the above. You have to watch him and understand you're in the same league. Of course, you're going to have to compete against him at some point.

What he's been able to do this has been amazing. He's an amazing player. MVP of our league, rightfully so, for a reason. We're looking forward to the challenge of competing against him.

This whole group for that matter. It's going to be a lot of fun. They're a great team. Well-coached. He's an amazing player. It's going to be a fun series.

Q. Being a lead point guard in the NBA, how do you balance attacking the basket, being aggressive for yourself, but also managing passing to others and making sure everybody is involved?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: Yeah, I think there's ebbs and flows to it. There's never a consistent right answer. I'm at my best when I'm obviously more aggressive. But I think every game calls for something different.

I'm not perfect. I have bad games. I'll have a game where I shoot five shots, and I pass the ball too much. I'll have a game where I shoot too much, probably could have passed a little more.

There's no right or wrong answer. I think the best thing to do is just learn from experience. Not like I'm a vet or OG, I'm in year five. I try to learn as much as can I from these experiences to help me as my career goes forward.

Q. Talk about what your dad has meant to you. He's gotten a lot of news in the other direction. What has he meant to you in your basketball journey and as a father?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: Yeah, obviously my relationship with my pops is well-documented. He means the world to me. He's been my biggest fan my whole life. My dad doesn't think that I can do any wrong. My whole life he's always said I'm the best, I'm going to be the best.

We have a very close relationship. Growing up my dad got laid off when I was in, like, elementary school. I lived down the road from the elementary and the middle school. I would make my dad drive me every day. That's how we connected.

Growing up, he started working third shift. My only real time to connect with him was in the morning. We would watch SportsCenter together in the morning before he would drop me off at school and sleep for the rest of the day until he had to ref or whatever the case was.



Me and my dad are really close. Obviously, that's well-documented. I'm excited he's going to be in the building. The NBA has allowed him to be back in Indy, as well.

Yeah, I think the commentary around my dad got a little ridiculous. Of course, I'm going to say that. I'm his son. It got a little over the top. He was wrong. That is what it is. I don't think any of us want to be defined by our worst moments. That's just sports media. Sometimes we just take a super good thing or a super bad thing and overblow it. It is what it is.

He's learned from it. It won't happen again. Love my pops dearly. Really thankful he's going to be in the building along with me on this journey.

Q. What makes Alex Caruso such an effective defender on and even more so off the ball?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I think he's just got a great basketball mind. A really high I.Q. as a defender. Just as a basketball player in general, seems like he's always in the right spots.

I saw a Zach LaVine interview the other day where he called him like a crash dummy. He's willing to put his body in so many different places, do whatever it takes to win.

He's a great player. Last couple years having to deal with him in Chicago. Glad he was out of our division. Here we are again, so...

Definitely excited to compete against him and this whole team.

Q. When or if did you stop being fueled by doubters? You were passed up a few times in the draft. Was it getting the second contract? Olympic gold medal? Has there been a moment where you're like, I no longer have to be fueled by this stuff or that's still a driving force for you?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: No, I've never stopped. It will never stop. I think that's part of my drive. Obviously, I want to be the best. I want to be great. I want to squeeze every ounce of God-given ability that I have to be the best player I can be.

But any doubt is always good for me. I love to hear that stuff. I'll continue to tell you guys in certain moments that it doesn't matter what people say. But it matters and I enjoy it.

I think the greats try to find external motivation as much as they can and that's something that's always worked for me.

I understand what you're saying. It doesn't solidify who I am. I know who I am. I don't need anybody to tell me who I am or who I am as a player or person. I'm grounded in myself. I think a lot of that is through the Lord and Jesus and knowing who I am.

But I think that extra doubt, that extra fuel always helps.

Q. What can you remember playing alongside Chris Duarte?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: Great teammate of mine. Loved playing alongside him, a guy I still have a relationship with to this day. When I got traded here, he was a big part of helping me out with my transition here. I got a love lot of for CD and his family.

Q. The two best teams with the best records since January 1 have been you guys and Oklahoma City, yet there is a decided advantage people see Oklahoma City having. You're one of the biggest underdogs in recent NBA Finals history. How do you see that? Do you see it that way? Do you see Oklahoma City being this great team that you're going to have to upset?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I mean, they're a great team. They're historically great on both sides of the ball. They have the MVP. I mean, there's so many different things you could name down the list of why they are so great at what they do, why they're such a great team.

We know this is a great team. If we were to win a championship, I don't want to win any other way. I don't want to go around or over. I want to go through. You want to go through the best team, the best challenge.

This is the best challenge. This is the best team in the NBA. It's been the best team in the NBA all year. They're well-coached. They just do everything so well. There's no shortcuts to beating this team.

We know the odds are stacked against us. It is what it is. We want to be here. We want to play against the best. This is the best. We look forward to the challenge as a group.

Q. You talked about this before, maybe when you signed your extension. Being from Oshkosh, then going through Ames, now you're in Indianapolis, a small market, you know that small market has been a discussion this week. Within that light, can you describe the charm or what you like about playing in Indianapolis.

TYRESE HALIBURTON: Well, yeah, I'm from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, town of like 70,000 people. There's nothing to do. I didn't have anything to do growing up. I stayed in the house or went to the local YMCA to basketball, went to the high school to play, went to my park at Oaklawn Elementary. Whatever it was, there wasn't a ton to do.

I just think in my life, I really feel like right now in my life, I'm not talking about basketball, but in the offseason, I could live anywhere and be just fine. As long as I got my dog, my video games and a court, I'll be fine.

I just feel like being in Indy, like, it's a great place for me. Indy is a much bigger place than I'm even accustomed to. I know people say it's a small market, whatever the case is. Like, I didn't grow up somewhere where it was much bigger, have more to do.

So, I love being in Indy. Indy has been a great place for me and my family. My whole family lives there now. We love being there. It's a lot of fun for me. I don't need, like, the glitz and glamour of a large city or anything. I really like I think hometown, small-town feel from our fans, right? I think OKC can relate to that, as well?

Our home-court advantages are different because people are really passionate about our teams? Their parents were passionate about the team, and their parents before that were passionate about the team. I think that's a different type of home-court advantage or different type of fan than like a bigger city, if that makes sense.

That's why I enjoy being a part of it, why I want to be a part of it for the rest of my career. I really enjoy being a Pacer.

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