

# NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Thursday, June 5, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Mark Daigneault

Game 1: Postgame

Pacers 111, Thunder 110

**Q. Mark, I imagine you spent a lot of this week reviewing some of the Pacers' comebacks. What maybe felt like a common denominator tonight? Where did you sense things went off the rails?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: The common denominator is them. That's a really good team. Credit them for not only tonight but their run. They've had so many games like that that have seemed improbable. They just play with a great spirit, they keep coming, they made plays, made shots. They deserved to win by a point.

We got to learn from it. Obviously a lot of things we can clean up. Credit them, they went and got that game.

**Q. Was this reminiscent of Denver Game 1 to you, just controlling much of the game, till the very end? Is that experience you can lean back on?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I mean, the Playoffs take you to the limit. They put your back against the wall, in games, in series. If you make it this far, you have to endure to do that. It gives you rich experiences that you can draw on.

The biggest experience we've had is understanding that every game's a new game. The most important game of the series is always the next one, regardless of the outcome.

We would have liked to win tonight, but tonight was a starting point, not an end point. There's a lot of things we can improve on. There's a lot of things I'm sure Indiana thinks they can improve on. Now the series starts to evolve.

Would've liked to get the game, but need to be a better game in Game 2.

**Q. What changed defensively for you guys, offensively for them, after halftime?**



MARK DAIGNEAULT: I thought they loosened us up a little bit. They took better care of the ball. Obviously I'm sure that was a huge theme for them coming in and at the half.

So I thought they did a good job of attacking. They made a couple more shots, obviously. We'll have to look at it. But I thought our conversion on the turnovers in the first half hurt us a little bit. Like, we didn't get the kind of juice for that squeeze that we normally do when we turn teams over. We can take a look at that.

I thought offensively for us, we hit the paint like crazy. We took, like, 50 something shots in the paint for only 40 something points. We can look at those. We have to finish stronger. We have to be stronger with the ball or spray some of those out and look at those pictures. This is what happens when you play a team. You learn them. You get a feel for them in Game 1, then the series starts to evolve.

**Q. Obviously opportunity lost to lead all night then lose. How do you not let it trickle into the next game? What have your guys done to lead you to believe it won't be maybe the defining game of the series?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: There's a lot more games left in the series. We understand that. We got to get ourselves to zero, as we always do. That's a habit that hopefully we've formed. These guys have made a habit of being able to get ourselves centered and play our best game in the next game.

You have to tip your hat to them. They got us tonight. They played really well. They deserved to win. But we got to learn from it, we got to improve like we would if we had won the game and get ourselves ready for Game 2. That's really what it comes down to.

**Q. You mentioned the conversion, some of the stuff you had around the rim that just didn't good down. What did you notice in real-time about the angles you weren't getting on drives or things that you can clean up?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, it was a little bit of

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everything. I thought we were a little sloppy on some gathers. They got a piece of the ball on some of the plays. I thought there were some that we got probably jammed out there, we could've gotten to two feet or spread the ball back out. Some of them we didn't finish, which is part of the game. We don't have to be perfect, but we do have to learn from it. This is a team we haven't played a ton this season. Tonight gave us a feel for them.

We've got to take that feel, figure out where we can improve, and just improve as the series goes on. That's always our mantra through these series, is we have to grow with the series. That's going to be our challenge in this one. But we got to get to work on that obviously.

**Q. You got the turnovers tonight, 25, but they didn't produce a lot of points. You lead the playoffs in points off turnovers. Obi Toppin, he came up with a big three-pointer, was he doing to get open or were they running some stuff for him? Seemed like he hurt you tonight.**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I mean, the turnovers, that I thought was a big part of it. Our conversion, we want to be fast up the floor. I didn't think we converted a lot of advantageous situations tonight. So we can learn from that.

Like I said, we want to be in the paint against this team. I felt like we got there a lot and didn't convert those. Offensively there's things we can look at.

Defensively they made some plays. They made some shots. Nesmith made some big shots. Toppin shot the heck out of the ball. I don't know what they shot from three as a team 45, 46. They shot the hell out of the ball. They have all Playoffs. We have to look at the ones, if they're contested and they just make the shot, you tip your hat. There was a lot of them that were on our breakdowns. Credit them, they made us pay when we made mistakes tonight.

**Q. Seemed like with some of the switching you were getting into, they were able to get a little bit more Siakam and Turner on your smalls. Is that something you're concerned about the height advantage?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Only if they take advantage of it. Some of it is the cost of doing business, to be able to get perimeter speed on the court, get more switching in the game. It's obviously something that is a tradeoff.

We can look at it. I thought the small lineup at the end of the first half looked pretty good. Offensively, we didn't move the scoreboard, but I thought we were getting some

good stuff there. That's why I went back to it down the stretch.

When we're small, we have to be pressure oriented and contain the ball. I thought they got some cracks against us that hurt us a little bit more than the post-ups did. We'll look at everything. We obviously have to be better if we want to win Game 2.

**Q. You had a starting lineup change. What was the reasoning going to Wallace? Late you closed with no centers. Are you seeing early this might be a smaller series?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: It was tonight. That was obviously the intention. I thought getting Cason out there really defensively giving us another perimeter guy for Haliburton and Nembhard, that was the idea there.

We've been pretty fluid with the lineup throughout the course of the season. Cason started 40-something games. We changed the lineup a million times. We haven't in the Playoffs. That's why we do it during the regular season, so that it's not earth shattering when we do it.

I thought the guys adapted. We got off to good starts in both halves. We'll see how the series goes. We have a lot of optionality. We'll look at everything. We'll look at anything we can to try to give ourselves the best chance to win.

**Q. I think Indiana scored 12 points in the final two and a half minutes. Do you think it was the pace that put you guys at a disadvantage? How would you assess how your defense performed in the last two and a half minutes?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: A little bit of everything. They made some plays. On some of those plays they made some shots. They got a couple that you wish you'd get back. We had bonus fouls, which were costly.

Then offensively we didn't move the scoreboard as well as we could have. So you just add all that up and that's how you get that sort of comeback.

But you tip your hat to them. They made plays. They've done it all Playoffs. This is part of their identity. They have a lot of belief. They never think they're out of it, so they play with great confidence even when their back's against the wall. They proved that tonight.

To me, that's a game that they went and got. It's a game that we can look at and improve in a lot of different areas. That's our challenge right now as we head into Game 2.



**Q. Their last turnover came with a lot of time left in the game. Did you feel there was anything you stopped doing to cause those turnovers or what they did to stop turning the ball over?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: We can look at it. I mean, it's never our, like, end game, is to like turn them over. It's really about disruption, disruption of their rhythm, getting our pressure into the game, using our speed. Oftentimes that yields turnovers, but it also yields non-rhythm shots.

If they're lining up, rhythm shots are getting deep in the paint on us, then you know we've had some sort of breakdown of that. It's not just about turning them over. It's about trying to force them away from what's comfortable. I thought we did that for much of the game. Obviously down the stretch they did a great job of generating what they needed to do to win.

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