

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Thursday, June 5, 2025

Indiana Pacers

Rick Carlisle

Game 1: Postgame

Pacers 111, Thunder 110

Q. You guys have obviously made a habit of these incredible last-second events throughout this postseason. How, in a building where this team does not give up leads, where did you find the wherewithal to pull this one off?

RICK CARLISLE: Just had to hang in. First half was rough. 19 turnovers. The good thing was it was only nine points. So we were within reach of still being in the game. I think we won the third quarter by three, which was progress.

And then they went up 15, and we just said, hey, let's just keep chipping away at the rock, you know. Got to keep pounding the rock and just chip away and hang in.

We had a lot of experience in these kinds of games, and our guys have a real good feel for what it's all about, giving ourselves a chance, and we got fortunate but made plays.

Q. Take us through the locker room after the game, the message, because you want to enjoy it but you also quickly have to move on to the next one.

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, we haven't been celebrating a whole lot with anything, really. Some of that is our experience last year. Some of it is Pascal having been through this kind of a run and getting to the Finals before.

We know we have a lot of work to do, and we have to play a lot better. I mean, 19 turnovers in a half, if it's not a record for the Finals, it's got to be up there close to it. And they are a menace defensively. We too often took it into crowds, and then you know, other times they just take the ball out of your hands. You know, the level of their defense is crazy good.

But to answer your question, a real even temper after the game, and now there's two days between the first two games instead of a 13-day series which we had with New



York, this is day 1 of 17 days. So, this is going to be a long journey and a lot going on. So, we're just going to have to keep our eye on the ball and keep focusing on one another.

Q. Besides taking better care of the basketball, what went on in the locker room at halftime? It seemed like you guys might have figured something out or wanted to approach things differently than that first half.

RICK CARLISLE: Well, there were different areas. I mean, they were getting to the rim a lot in the first half. The turnovers were the first thing that we talked about. You know, it seemed like we were doing a good job on the boards but they had 20 more shots than we did in the first half. That was really fool's gold, too.

So, look, it was just hit the reset button. Let's go whistle to whistle in the third quarter, try to chip away at it, and try to hang in.

Q. I know you're being Cool Hand Luke right now and all that, but at any point did you say, damn, that was a hell of a comeback?

RICK CARLISLE: No, no, hey, listen, been through too much of this over the years. We've just got to be very much present in the moment and understand what this is all about. This is all about keeping poise and at the same time having a high level of aggression and those two forces fly in the face of each other a bit.

And look, this arena is madness. I mean, this is -- you know, this is -- I don't know, from a road perspective, this was -- the decibels were insane. There's a lot going on. You know, grateful to hang in and give ourselves a chance in the end but now we've got to keep our eye on the ball.

Q. Nembhard's play the last few minutes, not just the shots but the defense, what was he able to do to keep you guys connected and give you guys a chance to take it at the end?

RICK CARLISLE: He made plays at both ends. The one stop on Shai at the end was a big play, and then we got the rebound. There was the step-back three, which was a big

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momentum play. I think it went from six to three.

And there was an and-one, he got to the rim, I don't know what point it was in the fourth but a lot of big plays and you've got to have playmakers against Oklahoma City. They make it so difficult defensively.

Q. It looked like Daigneault review of the Siakam out-of-bounds play, the guys were huddling before the ruling came down. I assume that you gave them a directive on how to play the next possession if it didn't go in your favor. How comfortable were you in not calling a timeout in that situation and letting Tyrese just go spray the floor?

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, that's very -- we talked about it, but we still don't know the outcome of the challenge yet. We said if it is their ball, let's get the stop. There's going to be a difference in the shot clock and the game clock and if we get a stop and get the rebound, we're going to go. Hopefully get the ball in Tyrese's hands and look to make a play.

All that worked out. I mean, you know, the Nembhard play to stay in front of Shai was a huge play. I don't know if Nesmith or Obi got the rebound, I haven't looked at it yet, but we were able to get the ball into Ty's hands and he made the shot.

Q. After Game 1 in New York, Tyrese told this cool story about you guys would put the ball in his hands when he was younger, and you guys weren't very good, to work on one day being in these kinds of moments. Now that it's worked out, not just once, not just twice, but three times in the end of these playoff games where he wins it with a shot, what's it like for you to watch him at the end of these games just sort of knowing the investments that you guys made years ago?

RICK CARLISLE: Well, getting to this point is a long process. You make a trade for a player like that, three and a half years ago, whatever it was. You look at the present but you look toward the future, and the hope was that we could build quickly.

Kevin [Pritchard] and Chad [Buchanan] did a great job with surrounding Ty with the right guys, and getting Pascal last year was reverential for our team. We just try to get the ball in his hands as much as possible in those situations, and when it doesn't happen, we have Nembhard and we have Pascal. That gives us three playmakers in our closing group.

So you know, all three of them do great things. So we

were very fortunate tonight. But we did a lot of things to give ourselves a chance, and that was very good.

Q. One of the pillars you said this team is built on is tenacity. From a coach's perspective, does it rejuvenate your coaching energy when you see this team continue to be resilient night in and night out?

RICK CARLISLE: My coaching energy's fine.

But look, it's a group I love. It's a group that we've invested a lot in. A lot in how we were going to draft, who we were going to draft, development. This year, especially, is a year that I'm proud of from a coaching perspective because not only did we win enough games to get into the Top 4 but we are still developing players. I mean, [Jarace] Walker played 1,100 or 1,200 minutes. Mathurin played over 2,000, started over 48 games.

And, look, Oklahoma City is doing it before everybody's eyes. They have been a development machine over the last five years since Mark has been the coach. From those perspectives, you know, this series has a lot of intrigue, and should, for the fans.

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