

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Thursday, June 5, 2025

Oklahoma City

Alex Caruso

Chet Holmgren

Game 1: Postgame



Pacers 111, Thunder 110

Q. Alex, I imagine you spent a lot of the past week watching some of the comebacks the Pacers had. What sort of stuck out to you about the way they won those games, a common denominator? Where do you think things went off the rails?

ALEX CARUSO: I mean, I don't know if 'went off the rails' is a correct term. We lost the game. I thought we played good enough to win. We just didn't finish the game.

Credit to them, that's how they've played for the whole post-season. They kind of strayed true to themselves, their brand of basketball. They threw in a couple big shots down the stretch. That's kind of been a key for them, too, in a lot of those games where they played till the end of the game, they might have some type of comeback and end up winning. They found a way to get enough stops.

We'll go back and watch the film. I don't think we played poorly. There will probably be some stuff we can clean up and come back and get ready for Sunday.

Q. Alex, this was pretty reminiscent of Denver Game 1 for you guys. Do you look back on that experience at all moving forward?

ALEX CARUSO: Yeah, you can, just from a sense of kind of the same game flow. We played good enough to win that game, controlled it for the most part. Was up double-digits most of that game, as well. Then they made some big shots. We made a couple mistakes down the stretch to give them free throws. There's some similar stuff from that.

I think moving forward, the mentality of this team is good. We'll go back to the film and see what coach has for us, then move from there.

Q. Ever been part of a game where you force 25 turnovers and you lose, 14 steals, that many takeaways and you come up on of the short end of things?

ALEX CARUSO: I don't know. I've played a lot of games in my lifetime, but not in the NBA probably.

Q. Chet, what did you feel offensively out there? It seemed like you got a lot of opportunities in the paint, stuff going downhill. Do you feel the angles that you had to the rim were good or maybe some opportunities for improvement?

CHET HOLMGREN: I mean, there's always opportunities for improvement. We're going to go back, see where we can be better. I feel like we were getting really good cracks at it, getting good looks, getting advantages.

Especially myself, just wasn't finishing those plays. Got to slow down and look how I can kind of convert those.

Q. They got up 20 threes in the second half. What did you see in terms of their motion? What was giving you a hard time with them?

ALEX CARUSO: They made 20?

Q. No, got up 20.

ALEX CARUSO: I was going to say.

Q. 10 for 20 in the second half.

ALEX CARUSO: Like I said earlier, they made a couple good ones, highly contested ones, too.

You have to eliminate the ones that we give up that are out of rotation where we don't get there in time, or in early transition where we're not matched up.

I give them credit. They made big shots. Myles Turner banked in a side-step three. Made one in the corner. Nesmith made one highly contested over me. Nembhard threw in one off of an iso that was highly contested.



Big shots. Maybe we just get the luck of the bounce and one doesn't go in, it's a different feeling. At the same time we have to look at the right stuff. We'll look at that tomorrow. Mark has done a good job all of post-season helping us recognize what we need to be better at. Like I said, we'll regroup and come back Sunday.

Q. Alex, with all the turnovers and steals, you didn't turn 'em into points off turnovers the way you usually do. Was there a reason for that or just the transition wasn't as flowing?

ALEX CARUSO: Yeah, I'm not sure off of first look, just on memory of the game. Maybe we could have been a little more aggressive getting to the rim with the ball in transition after some of those instead of trying to come up and run sets. I don't know if that's actually true or not. That's probably in the history kind of basketball tells me we probably weren't aggressive enough pushing those turnovers.

At the same time, that's a positive note, we created so many turnovers. That's something you can hang your hat on and maybe not get to that number every night, but it's a positive note to show that we were swarming and having good defense tonight.

Q. Alex, you obviously are aware of what Haliburton has been doing with the game on the line throughout the Playoffs. What is the feeling when he's got the ball in his hands, time is ticking down?

ALEX CARUSO: I don't know. I felt confident we were still going to get a stop. I recognized they were going to play quick. As soon as Siakam or Nesmith got the rebound and threw to it Toppin, I knew that wasn't where the ball was going to end up. I was trying to locate Tyrese. Cason was on him. I felt pretty confident. Maybe he crawls up into him a little more and makes it more contested and physical to get to that spot.

Yeah, you don't want to live and die with the best player on the other team taking a game winner with a couple seconds left. You want to try to control the game coming down so it doesn't fall into that.

Q. Alex, Shai said how you lose doesn't really matter, it's still a loss. Obviously this is the NBA Finals, Game 1, a game you had in control, then take the gut punch. How do you make it just like any other loss or do you look at it differently because the stakes are higher now?

ALEX CARUSO: I mean, it counts the same as when we lost by 40 in Minnesota in the last series. Counts the same

as when we lost by two or three at Denver Game 3 that series. It's all worth one.

It's the silver lining of it. But at the same time it's a loss. If we don't recognize that and feel, if it doesn't hurt right now, you're not frustrated with it, obviously there's something wrong with you.

Yeah, I mean, we play the game to win. They're all worth one. They got to get three more. We got to get four more.

Q. Alex, I've spoken to you about your veteran voice before. In moments like this, do you lean on that a little bit more or as a team are you already united?

ALEX CARUSO: We referenced it earlier, the Denver series Game 1 is eerily similar to this. We have at least a little bit of experience to go off of.

Yeah, I mean, my message would be the same. It will change a little bit, but it's recover, get ready for Game 2. At the same time it's all the stuff we talked about. It's worth one, it's the first of four. They're a good team. That's why they're in the Finals. We're a good team. That's why we're in the Finals. We just got to be a little bit better.

Q. Chet, 56-39 was the final rebounding disadvantage for you guys. Surprised me a little bit. Did you feel there were opportunities for you guys and that was a big missed one?

CHET HOLMGREN: Yeah, obviously we could be better on the glass. That stood out to me, too, at first. They did have more offensive rebounds than we did. We forced a lot of turnovers and got a lot of steals. There's no rebound opportunity on plays like that 'cause they're not even getting a shot up.

I guess that stat doesn't tell the whole story. But we can still continue to be better on that end in that area.

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