

# NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Sunday, June 8, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Mark Daigneault

Game 2: Pregame

**Q. Just in talking to your guys over the last couple days, they have always mentioned some of the chippies, they would say, didn't go down in Game 1. Is there anything that you guys looked at in terms of finishing fundamentals or is this the breaks of the game, almost like jump shooting?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: We try to focus on what we can control and there was plenty in that game that we could control that we could have done better, and the more you do that, the more you execute that, the less you're dependent on the variants of makes and misses. And so that was our focus the last couple days.

It's always a focus. I think it's a strength of our team as we try to tilt the odds in our favor with execution and competitiveness, and we are always trying to look to improve the things we can control as we head into a game.

**Q. Just having now two games in four days, do things feel a little bit more in rhythm, and are you expecting just a cleaner, smoother performance for any reason?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I always expect our team to play well. You know, they have built that kind of trust over time.

The two days is different but it's different for both teams. You know, there's trade-offs of it. It's a long time in between games. It's different from the regular rhythm but you also get more rest and recovery, and you can really load the tank as you head into the game.

So we'll see how we play tonight but we're confident coming into it.

**Q. In about half an hour or so, they are going to honor Don Nelson up there with the Chuck Daly Award. You weren't in the league when his career ended --**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Or in middle school [laughter].

**Q. I'm doing math. It's close. The innovations that he**



brought to offense, I guess how familiar were you of those in those middle school years, and just the fact that some of that stuff still holds up today, what does that say about his legacy?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I coached some guys in the G League that were veteran players, and that had played in the NBA, and then we've had assistant coaches here over the years that have played in the NBA. I always was interested in learning about the coaches that they played for.

And so I'm a little bit familiar with Coach Nelson through the lens of a couple people that played for him, and I think, obviously, a giant of the game but unbelievably ahead of his time, with pace obviously, but also like player confidence.

Like I coached a couple guys that played for him that were like 10-day [contract] type players, and all they talked about was the confidence you had when you played for him; the confidence he instilled in the guys that are like down the roster the way that he would just throw them in the game and expect them to play well.

Then even as much as he was an offensive innovator, he was a defensive innovator. He was cross-matching aggressively before anybody was doing that, like years before. He would come into games and put Baron Davis on the center to create offensive problems for the other team and that was just stuff that wasn't happening. And not knowing him at all, and certainly not being familiar day to day, it was a different era.

I do appreciate the fact that he seemed boundless in terms of what he was willing to do, and he wasn't really relying on what was conventional. So I have unbelievable respect for him. It's awesome that he's being honored tonight.

**Q. You guys have so many elite perimeter defenders, so anybody could pick up Tyrese in the last six seconds. Is that the matchup you wanted? Do you practice -- obviously you do -- end-of-game situations? Who do you want on Tyrese when he's going to get the ball in that situation?**

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MARK DAIGNEAULT: It depends on the starting point, and that play was a transition defense play, and so the answer is somebody. You know, especially when you're playing this team. You know, they are so fast up the floor. They are so well-spaced. They move it so quickly that getting to five-on-five is always the priority against them. The minute you start to -- forget about the last play, in general, the minute you try to manipulate cover -- who is on who, they will burn you.

There was a Nembhard three in front of our bench early in the game, it was I think the first timeout of the game where we were trying to do that. We were trying to bump a matchup out and the ball moved and found him in the corner, and it's a great lesson against this team. In those areas of the game, when it gets loose and it's off of misses or turnovers, you just have to prioritize getting five-on-five. It doesn't really matter who is on who. The fact that the ball got tagged, you know, is the starting point.

**Q. We've seen a lack of home-court advantage across the league. Do you attribute anything to over the last years the fact that home-court advantage has lessened across the league, whether it's three-point variance or anything else or do you think there's any real truth to that?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I'm always uncomfortable answering these questions because I have no clue. I don't have the same -- it's a great question for Coach Carlisle, who has seen a lot more basketball in the NBA than I have.

I don't know. You know, all I know is we love playing at home in front of our fans, but I couldn't tell you other than that.

**Q. I ask this knowing very well we might see it tonight but with the double-big lineup, what makes it a challenge to maybe go with that lineup against a team like the Pacers?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: What I would say is we have a lot of optionality, and when you have a lot of options and you choose one, you're leaving others on the table.

I think we are pretty familiar with the archetypes of our lineups and what the trade-offs are, and one of the strengths of our team is we can deploy those at different times, different times in a game, different times in a series. I obviously opted to go away from that in Game 1. That's not necessarily predictive of the rest of the series. That's just where we started the series.

That lineup has been very good for us and has very strong strengths and if we think it can help us in a game or in a

portion of a game, then we're to going to it.

**Q. Rick said the rebounding discrepancy in Game 1 was because they were turning it over so much that you didn't have a chance to rebound some missed shots. Do you agree with that, or was there something else you guys weren't doing on the glass?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: We'd like to get every rebound we can, obviously. When we play smaller, one of our trade-offs we are accepting is that we don't rebound the ball as well but we have other strengths with those lineups.

But the possession stuff is noisy because you have to account for total shots. We shot more shots than they did by a good margin in that game. That was because of the turnovers. So we lost the rebounding but won the overall possession battle, even when you just look at total shots, you then have to look at free throws, because if you take more shots and the other team takes more free throws that can throw that off.

Generally we want to get more shots than our opponent and however we do it, we'll take it. But when the ball goes up in the air on a shot, we want to get every rebound and we emphasize getting every rebound. There's always room for improvement there. But at the same time, like I said, there's sometimes trade-offs on decisions we make with lineups and stuff like that.

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