

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Sunday, June 8, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Mark Daigneault

Game 2: Postgame



Oklahoma City Thunder 123, Indiana Pacers 107

Q. Mark, you guys had 25 assists tonight. What did you feel like were some of the factors in the offensive flow?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I thought Indiana is kind of an acquired taste. We haven't played them a ton. They're not in the West obviously. They play a very distinct style on both ends. I felt like tonight there were a lot of things we were a little better in and more comfortable. That was on both ends of the floor.

I thought the guys did a good job of improving, which is important going from Game 1 to Game 2.

Q. I just wonder what it feels like against Indiana when you're operating in that sort of 15- to 20-point lead and what you felt was different about the middle quarters compared to Game 1?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I just think you have to understand against them because of the pace and because of the three-point shooting, there's a variance element to every NBA game in this NBA, but certainly in the games that they play.

I just thought we were the aggressor tonight for much of the game, even when we had a lead. I thought the guys did a really good job of keeping the foot on the gas, especially defensively. I thought we really amped it up on that end of the floor. There were a couple times where we got off track on both ends, but we were able to course correct pretty quickly.

I thought the guys did a really good job of recognizing when we weren't where we needed to be and getting there quicker.

Q. What did you think of Aaron Wiggins and the spark he gave you guys off the bench, the rest of those bench guys?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I mean, they were huge tonight. He was huge tonight. I give him a lot of credit because he was a huge part of our success this season and in the Playoffs, his role has been variant night to night. But he hangs in there. He was huge in the Game 4 win at Denver, in that series. He was massive tonight. Went in there with great confidence. Didn't go until the second quarter and dove right into the game.

Great professionalism, great readiness and a huge performance for us in that situation.

Q. There was a stretch in the fourth where Tyrese gets going. You held him in check. It seemed like he maybe wasn't getting the ball to teammates, rebounding. Was that part of maybe keeping him at bay? What did you like about your defense on him?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, they're not the type of style where you're just like keying in on one player, just because of the way they play. They're more a conceptual team. You have to be kind of a conceptual defense against them. If you do that, I think it has a downstream effect on everybody against them.

I thought we were able to do that tonight. I thought, like I said, the guys just really improved in a lot of like subtle areas from Game 1 to Game 2, which is what I have to do in a playoff series to stay ahead of the series.

Q. You played your bigs differently today in terms of the rotation. What did you like about the way Chet and Isaiah played separately and together?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: They were both really good in both situations. I thought both of them gave us huge lifts on both ends of the floor. That was one area where we improved tonight, was our pick-and-roll coverage against their bigs. They're a different look because of the rolling, the popping, just the way they play.

I thought one area that we really improved was on the defensive end in that area of the game.

They both were great. I thought Chet, in particular, had a

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rough offensive night in Game 1. As always, he rose back up and was really, really good.

Q. How do you feel your offensive process changed from Game 1 to Game 2, specifically in getting into your sets a little earlier?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, they're a very distinct team. They're not like a vanilla team. They play a very distinct style. It's part of their effectiveness. It's both ends of the floor. They have an offensive reputation. They've been branded as an offensive team. They have a defensive identity as well that's predicated on pressure and perimeter physicality.

I just thought in a lot of areas it would be easy to just say that one thing looked better tonight. But that would be oversimplifying. I think we were just a little bit better in a lot of different areas of execution, of pace to your point, organization, decision making in the paint, aggressiveness at the basket, gathering the ball. We just were a tick forward in all those areas.

Q. With Shai, after Game 1 there was some discussion it was a bad 38-point game, which speaks volumes about what he's capable of. You look to tonight. All Playoffs along, 36 and 5, kind of creeping up the territory charts when it comes to the impact.

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, unsurprising at this point. It's just kind of what he does. He just continues to progress and improve and rise to every occasion that he puts himself in and that we put ourselves in.

I thought his floor game tonight was really, really in a great rhythm. I thought everyone played better individually, and I thought we played better collectively. I think that was a by-product.

I give the team a lot of credit. That's a long 48 hours when you lose Game 1 like that. The guys did great job of just focusing on what we needed to do to stack to a win tonight. That's how we got it. That was individual players, collectively, offense, defense, everything.

Q. Jalen, 19 points, 5 of 14 shooting. The impact overall seemed to be there. What are you seeing in terms of the shots he's getting and his overall floor game?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: He didn't get off to a great start in his first stint. He really settled into the game. He's huge for us. All the things he brings to the game defensively, size, versatility, physicality, offensive on ball, off ball, that floor is really high. We really need him every single night.

When he has the great offensive nights, then he's unbelievable.

He's a great player independent of that. He's another guy that took a nice step forward. We all calibrated to our opponent. You have to continue to improve in a series. They're going to be home, be very comfortable. They play very well there in these Playoffs. If we don't continue to improve, we'll get caught behind them.

Q. I think Shai had six assists to six different players. What does it say about the kind of trust that exists between him and vice versa in a situation like this that he's willing to get off the ball?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I mean, that's been a mark of this whole season. I think that's an area, the scoring and efficiency gets a lot of shine, but he's really steadily improved as a playmaker. He's been doing that for a long time.

I thought in Game 1, like I said, it was as much to do with us calibrating the opponent in a style very different from really what we've seen in these Playoffs. I thought we did a good job of that tonight.

Again, we have to continue to evolve in the series. Indiana is going to do that. We need to do that individually and collectively.

Q. While keeping the same starting lineup, as you get into your bench, you stayed much bigger at the two, three, four than Game 1. What went into that decision?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Just the feedback from Game 1. We had regular-season games that we studied. We studied their games leading into this. We threw out what we threw out in Game 1. I thought there were a lot of good things in that. I also thought we could push a little bit in terms of size tonight obviously with the way that we went.

It takes discipline. But we try to really use these early games in the series to learn what our options are and what our tradeoffs are and not assume anything. That was the intent tonight, is just get a little bit more information.

Now we have it. We'll apply that as we move forward in the series.

Q. Compared to Game 1, defense seemed a little different. Not as many turnovers. Talk about the differences.

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Our defense?

Q. Yes.

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Some of that is Indiana. There's two teams out there. When teams play against us, they understand that taking care of the ball is critical. So I thought Game 1, first half was probably an outlier. Then I do think when we play smaller, we tend to be a little bit more of a turnover defense. When we play bigger, we have other strengths.

It's a combination of things. But I thought overall every look we threw out tonight, the guys did a great job with.

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