

# NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Sunday, June 8, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Alex Caruso

Game 2: Postgame

Oklahoma City Thunder 123, Indiana Pacers 107

**Q. AC, what have you learned through two games about what it sort of takes to play with a lead against Indiana? What urgency did you sense from that group that started the second quarter?**

ALEX CARUSO: Yeah, I mean, they're hellbent on playing the way they want to play for 48 minutes, whether they're up 20, down 20, tied game, early in the fourth, start of the game. They're going to play how they're going to play.

I think that's the test for us this series, is can we withstand their pace and their pressure that they put on us on offense, and defense of being physical, trying to play tough on that end, and sustain it for a full 48 minutes.

That's the challenge for us, is can we play at our best for 48 minutes in extended stretches. Even tonight we were up 19 or so, they made a little 6-0 run. Mark called timeout and we got back to playing how we needed to play. That's the test for us.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

ALEX CARUSO: Yeah, I don't remember specifically start of the second. We've played that lineup a lot through the Playoffs. Mark went back to it because we've had a lot of success. Me and Cason do a good job of mixing it up with whoever is the lead guard. Dub has great hands. I'm not sure if it was Chet or Hart. We have a versatility on the lineup. It lets Wigs get a little bit loose, too.

**Q. Mark called their offense conceptual. Rick called it an ecosystem. Obviously, Tyrese is the head of all of that. How do you guys feel like you balanced tonight guarding him, handling him, but were there other things you did to hold him in check?**

ALEX CARUSO: Yeah, I mean, give a lot of credit to Lu. I think he matched up with most of his minutes. Lu is accepting the challenge. I think Lu maybe only scored,



made one shot tonight. He knows the role he needs to play for us to have a chance to win this series and pick up that trophy at the end.

He's doing a good job of it.

Kind of speaking on the way they play, tonight they had five or six guys in 12 to 17-point range. All of them took about 10 to 12 shots. They're a very unselfish team. They're a very consistent team with whoever the ball finds, that person is aggressive to score. They got good players.

It comes down to making it as hard as we can for them and trying to force tough shots and finish possessions.

**Q. You had the fewest minutes in the regular season that you've had in a long time. What was that like for you? Was it tough as a guy who is used to playing? Was it good for you?**

ALEX CARUSO: Yeah, I mean, it's a double-edged sword. Some of that is I play a pretty erratic style regardless if it's Game 1 or if it's Game 2 of the Finals. I just only have one gear. I don't know how to play at 75 percent. Some of that was keeping me out of my own way, out of harm's way. I don't do a good job of that on my own.

Yeah, some of that, it was difficult just because I am such a competitive guy. If I'm only playing 15 to 20 minutes, if it's one of those nights where it's 15, we're not playing great, like my instinct is to, all right, coach, leave me in there, let me fix it, let me be the one to help us get out of it.

A little different in that aspect.

At the same time, we won 68 games in the regular season. We had a 12-, 13-man rotation through the year depending on who was hurt, different teams we played. That just comes with the nature of having a really good, deep team.

**Q. Have you gotten a chance to process being back in the Finals, especially the journey to get back to this level, how it impacts your play now?**

ALEX CARUSO: Yeah, just how difficult it is. It's not easy

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to, one, make the Playoffs. It's not easy to win a series. It's not easy to advance to the Finals. All of that shouldn't be taken for granted.

I keep seeing people for the first time this postseason, people that I know or don't know, they say, congratulations. I truly don't want them to tell me congratulations until the series is over and we've won. I don't feel like we've accomplished anything until we win four games. That's just kind of the mindset I have.

Like you said, getting here isn't guaranteed. Nobody gets a free pass. Nobody gets an extended welcome. You have to earn it every time. Being here is an accomplishment. But winning it is the real pinnacle.

**Q. Jalen was asked about going against you in practice. He said he tends to fry you a lot. Do you have a response to that?**

ALEX CARUSO: Dub is a very confident individual [smiling]. I'm not the best practice player. Once I made the NBA roster and I signed a contract, my intensity in practice dropped a little bit. In the game is kind of where it matters now. I think I've earned that spot in my career.

We'll let him have the days in between games.

**Q. I want to ask you about the offensive process that you felt as a team. You had 25 assists. Seemed like more of those inside-out ball movement plays you were able to get to throughout the tonight.**

ALEX CARUSO: That was something we touched on last postgame when I was up here. Just felt like we were playing in crowds a little bit, felt like we were forcing -- we weren't respecting good defense when we were driving to the basket. There were guys that were open. Maybe a little bit was that wanting to win the game so badly first night in Game 1 that we overlooked how we've played all year. I think tonight was a better representation of how we play. That's probably why we had good rhythm with shots going in and the ability to play inside-out.

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