

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

Indiana Pacers

Rick Carlisle

Game 3: Postgame

Indiana Pacers 116, Oklahoma City 107

Q. On a night that obviously you have a ton of contributions from a ton of guys, can you summarize the jobs that Ben and T.J. did for you guys coming off the bench?

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, those guys were tremendous. T.J. just brought a will, competitive will to the game. Mathurin jumped in there and immediately was aggressive and got the ball in the basket.

You know, look, this is the kind of team that we are. We need everybody to be ready. It's not always going to be exactly the same guys that are stepping up with scoring and stuff like that. But this is how we got to do it, and we got to do it as a team. And we've got to make it as hard as possible on them.

Q. What did you think of the way Tyrese performed tonight? Complete game over as far as scoring, distributing and rebounding, as well.

RICK CARLISLE: Terrific. Look, every game you're going to have to make adjustments against this defense. There's just going to be different looks. You're going to have different high-level defenders on you. You're going to see some different coverage stuff. It's going to be constantly changing.

So I thought his approach tonight was exactly what it need to be, a combination of spatial awareness and aggression, and you know, a real good feel for aggression to score along with getting his teammates involved at the right times.

And so you know, he was terrific. Pascal was terrific. Pascal scored the first six points of the game when points were hard to come by. And he did it on three difficult shots one-on-one, fadeaways. Those are tough shots.

I was proud of the way we bounced back from a rough



ending to the third quarter. That was something that could have shaken us up a lot, but the guys that went back in there to start the fourth, they kept their head down and kept competing.

Q. I want to ask you about Myles Turner. It looked like he was struggling the whole game but in the fourth quarter, he made like three or four different plays against Chet, and I want to know how you would do to keep all your guys mentally ready for this moment.

RICK CARLISLE: Well, Myles is under the weather. He may not even be with us tomorrow. He just hasn't been feeling well the last couple days. It was affecting his wind. He won't bring it up, but I think it's just appropriate to mention that he is working through something. Some kind of a cold or whatever but he's not feeling himself. We'll see where things are tomorrow with him.

I thought he did a great job of just taking a couple of deep breaths in the third quarter and just doing a reset and coming back in there ready. That's what a lot of this is. You have to be super resilient. Things happen in milliseconds. I mean, these guys go by you, they are dunking the ball, they are doing this, they are doing that. It's a lot going on.

Q. Going back to T.J., he had several steals, especially in the backcourt and you've been seeing that all season. Does it ever surprise you when he's still able to almost trick teams into that steal? Historically, does it remind you of anyone else?

RICK CARLISLE: I don't know. You know, this series features so many special players on both sides. You know, T.J. brings some very unique elements to our team, and he brings unique elements to the game in general.

We need all of our guys to bring whatever is their thing to our thing and have it be part of our thing, you know. But he's a guy that inspires a lot of people. He inspires our team a lot.

But listen, this was a great win. We've got to turn the page quickly. There's another game in 36 hours.



Q. What did you think of the defense that Andrew Nembhard and Ben Sheppard played on SGA tonight?

RICK CARLISLE: Well, they are giving it their absolute, full-capacity effort all the time. We have to look at the fouls, maybe there's some that are avoidable. But look, with him, he's the MVP. You've just got to try to make it difficult.

And you know, we've just got to keep platooning people onto him and try to keep our guys fresh somehow.

Q. A lot of factors to decide a series so tight like that. I want to ask you, how much of the environment, the atmosphere, will be key for a winner of this championship like we see the spark that T.J. brought today, and how do you work on this with your players?

RICK CARLISLE: The crowd, the environment? You know, I thought our crowd was great. They were everything that we had hoped for tonight. Oklahoma's crowd, we've talked about it in kind of telling our crowd through the media and whatever that we really need them.

They were great. Especially in the fourth quarter, it just went up a few decibels. It's one of many factors, as you mentioned.

Q. Talk about when Ben was out for the playoffs last year, did you make time to go talk to him and keep him engaged, and what has he meant for you guys in the playoffs this time around?

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, he was with the team. He just wasn't playing. He took a lot of notes, a lot of mental notes, and he may have written some things down. But I do know that after he sustained the injury, it was either in February or early March, you can order these calendars that start on a specific day and then they count days. And so I think it was Dr. [Neal] ElAttrache that did the surgery.

So there was a calendar sitting in our training room and every day he would come in and take one off, take one off. He was counting the days down to being cleared sometime in August and then be able to begin training camp, begin five-on-five with our guys in September and then be in training camp, really, with his eyes firmly set on an opportunity in the playoffs.

And so he's putting a lot of work to be ready for these moments, and tonight he was an absolute major factor.

Q. You mentioned earlier that this is who we've got to be, this is our team. Over the last couple years as this team came into its own, when did the players really

start to buy into the identity that they showed in the fourth quarter tonight?

RICK CARLISLE: I mean, we have great, great guys on our team. Things that make sense aren't a hard sell for our guys. You know, I mean, we've put an incredible amount of work into becoming better defensively. We're still not great. But we're way better than we were. It's taken tons of work. It's taken tons of -- you know, it's constant relationship building. It's a difficult system. And it just requires a lot of sacrifice.

But when you execute it the right way, you know, whether it's two years ago in some game that doesn't seem very meaningful in mid-January or in Game 3 of the Finals, these guys see where important things are important, and hard things are hard. That's a phrase I've used many times, hard things are hard.

But our guys, they have made the investment, and it's an ongoing thing. It's like a great marriage; it's a lot of work.

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