

# NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Thursday, June 12, 2025

Indiana Pacers

Rick Carlisle

Practice Day

**Q. I want to talk about the grit and determination of your team last night. Seems like everybody has the same mindset. Even though I may not play my best, I'll leave 100% on the floor. How huge was that? And talk about T.J., the energy he brought.**

RICK CARLISLE: Well, the magnitude of the challenge with Oklahoma City is daunting because of the kind of year that they had and how great they are.

They're historically great in so many different areas, and they got the MVP. It's hard. It takes nothing less than everything we possibly have together. It's only been three games. It feels like it's been longer.

This is an 18-day series, where the last one was 13 days. With how it's stretched out, it's a long haul. But we need everybody. We need everybody to put everything they have into it. That's how we've gotten to the Finals.

**Q. T.J. and Alex, a couple guys that have made their way in the NBA. What has impressed you about them?**

RICK CARLISLE: They're both self-made guys. They've overcome a lot. I mentioned this last week. We had Alex Caruso in one of our free agent camps in Dallas. I don't even remember what year it was. He hadn't even gotten into the league yet. He may have played internationally, something like that.

He had a good two or three days. We didn't even bring him to summer league or ask him to summer league.

Some of these guys that go under the radar have that level of grit and determination that is able to get them to the league and to get them some longevity and high impact.

Both of these guys are examples of that.

**Q. Can I ask you another Coaches Association question?**



RICK CARLISLE: You can try.

**Q. There's been some wild reports out there the last couple days about the Knicks asking for permission to interview all these coaches who already have jobs with other teams. Is there a stance from the Coaches Association about this very thing, going after head coaches who are already employed by other teams?**

RICK CARLISLE: I mean, why would there be an issue about having interest in great coaches?

**Q. It would be excluding guys...**

RICK CARLISLE: The names of guys, the permission is asked to speak to these guys, Jason Kidd, Billy Donovan, Quin Snyder, Chris Finch. Who is the fifth? There was another one, right?

**Q. Ime Udoka.**

RICK CARLISLE: Ime Udoka. These guys are all great coaches.

I don't have any problem with it. I'm just giving you my opinion. I'm not speaking for the Coaches Association.

To me, above all, it speaks to the value of great coaching. I don't see an issue with it, but I'm not authorized to speak on behalf of the Coaches Association. I'm only giving you my opinion.

**Q. You mentioned that Myles wasn't feeling well last night, might not be with you today. I wanted to know if he was able to come in.**

RICK CARLISLE: He's not coming to media. He was there for our film session. He's going home. Hopefully he'll feel better tomorrow. We'll see.

**Q. You guys have this 2-1 leads in every series so far.**

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, listen, before you even ask the question, we're not getting into answering questions about the future or anything like that.



I mean, you look at what Oklahoma did the beginning of the game, 16-7, boom, just like that. We have a lead at the end of the third quarter. Boom, all of a sudden, we're down five going into the fourth.

There's no looking forward. We study some of the things that have happened leading up to this. Beyond that, I'm not talking about anything having to do with series standings or any of that kind of stuff. It would be foolish.

If you have another question...

**Q. The human condition being what it is, what is it about this group that it does not relax in that situation when it has a 2-1 series lead? It comes out and keeps playing the same way.**

RICK CARLISLE: That's the challenge before us right now, is to maintain. It's got to be a killer edge to beat these guys. We're going to be an underdog in every game in this series. It was 10 and a half in the first two games, five and a half last night, then tomorrow.

It's a daunting challenge. Anything less than a total grit mindset, we just don't have a chance.

**Q. You've talked in the past about this team having a lot of leaders, everybody having a voice. How do guys that are maybe younger or quieter, Andrew, Aaron, Ben, fit into that scenario?**

RICK CARLISLE: Well, we communicate a lot with our players. Guys that aren't necessarily the overt vocal leaders by nature, we try to pull it out of them in the room.

Certain players, like Pascal is an example of a guy that has a lot of experience. He's a leader by nature. So at the appropriate times, he's always there to make an observation, to talk to the team about experiences that he's had, cautionary things to avoid, those kind of things.

Look, we've got great guys. I know Oklahoma has got great guys on their team. You can just tell. You can tell they're top-shelf character people. That's one of the great features of this series, just the competitive integrity, I think, on both sides. But the challenge is massive.

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