

# NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Thursday, June 12, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Mark Daigneault

Practice Day

**Q. You've talked about wanting to play into your identity across 48 minutes. The lower assist numbers across the series, maybe the way the turnovers have unfolded, your three-point rate through three games. Why has Indiana been successful at taking away so many parts of your identity?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Some of it's been our transition, I think. I think we do a lot of damage there that we haven't gotten in this series so far.

Indiana has done a good job defensively in the series, especially last game. Going back and watching the film, there's two teams out there. They deserve a lot of credit for how they played. I don't think we played a great game. I thought they had a lot to do with that, the way they played.

**Q. T.J. McConnell was saying it felt like early in the series all the 50/50 balls went your way. Why do you think that changed yesterday? Is that as simple as them going to get those? Fall into their lap?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Definitely wouldn't say falling into their lap. There's probably plays here and there that are lucky bounces. Generally those sorts of things, you got to be first to the ball.

It's been a strength of us all season. I think we have to, as a team, tap back into some of the things we've been strong in all year, after a game like yesterday. We were a little out of character in a lot of ways yesterday. I think that happens in a playoff series. Four games, five games, six games, seven games is a long time. You're going to get a range of games and experiences in that.

We have to get it course corrected pretty quickly if we want to give ourselves a better chance in Game 4.

**Q. With Alex and T.J., a couple of guys that largely are role players, they both have had game-changing moments in this series. To have guys that aren't**



**superstars be able to change games, how rare is that?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Well, their individual stories are incredible. I don't think in a playoff series it's rare. I think if you look at any series, there's a lot of players, again, four, five, six, seven games is a long time, 48 minutes is a long time. There's a lot of opportunities for people to get their fingerprints on the game.

Whether it's for us like Wiggins in Game 2 or Mathurin and McConnell in Game 3, Toppin in Game 1, I think this is pretty normal to see different players impact different games. That's the beauty of it. Tomorrow's a new game and a new opportunity for each individual player and each team to make their mark on the series and on the game.

**Q. It seemed like it was a disappointing evening but not a down team last night. Doesn't seem to be any sense of worry or fear or panic. Because you have made winning so easy when it's not, what is it about this group that being down 2-1 doesn't team to necessarily outwardly affect them?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I just think we stay pretty emotionally even in all of the different experiences. You really see that when we win. I think if you're going to get high on the wins, then the natural opposite of that is to get low on the losses. This team doesn't really swing violently between those two things. Never has.

I think a lot of that is just the personality of the players. They do a great job with that. So these are new experiences for us, but we're experienced enough to know what this is going to come down to. We got to take a look at the film from yesterday. We have to understand first what happened in the game and be able to define that accurately, then look at the things that we can improve on and go apply those forward in Game 4.

We try to do that win or lose. We try to make that our way of operating, regardless of the individual outcomes. It just gives you the most consistent approach through all the emotional ups and downs of a playoff series. The team does a great job of that.

**Q. Teams are well-prepared this time of year. There's**



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**very few things that guys aren't prepared for. How can you prepare your players for T.J. McConnell coming in and stealing inbounds passes, Mathurin taking midrange shots, these violent swings throughout the course of the game?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I think a lot of it's just controlling what we can control, being who we are, taking the game as it comes, understanding it's a 48-minute game, understanding it's a series. There's going to be natural swings in that. Different players are going to have different imprints on that.

Again, I think we understand that. We've seen (Nickeil) Alexander-Walker have good games against us, (Donte) DiVincenzo have big games against us. We've been in multiple series now. I think we have the wisdom from that to understand it.

We need to be who we are, focus on what we can control. We need to go out there and compete in the present moment and let those things win the day and be able to bet on that.

**Q. You just mentioned, be in the present moment. That's something that your players talk about that, be where your feet are. Is there anything you can share about not just the saying but how you have implemented that in your routine or maybe even back in training camp?**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I think it's just attacking every day, attacking every rep, attacking every possession and trying to make that a habit, and understanding the compounding nature of that and impact of that when you do that.

These are guys that have seen success taking that approach. When you do something, then you find success doing it, it reinforces it, breeds commitment. The guys have done a great job of building that muscle over a long period of time now.

This is why it's important, because being down 2-1 in a series, it can have emotions associated with it, but dragging those into the next experience isn't going to help anybody. Them being up 2-1, dragging that in isn't going to help them either.

You have to compete when the ball goes up in the air. We've made a habit of that. We have to double down again on that tomorrow.

**Q. Shai seems more emotionally agitated by Nembhard than anybody else all season. What is he doing? He's clearly a little bit more emotional than**

**we've seen.**

MARK DAIGNEAULT: You can ask him. I'm not going to make that assumption. The first play probably, first play of the game. Shai does a pretty good job of staying inside of himself. He's not perfect and he probably gets -- I don't even know what the word would be, but he probably gets off his game from time to time, possession to possession. I think one of his superpowers is the ability to get into the next possession, the next game, the next experience. He's the last guy I'm worried about with that.

That said, Indiana has done a great job through three games of the series with us. Like I said, we haven't played our best. Certainly in Game 3, we didn't play our best. I thought Indiana had a lot to do with that. I never want to discredit the opponent, all the effort they're putting in.

All their team, their players they just outplayed us, outcoached us, out-everything last night. We certainly need to move on and let that go. But we also need to own that so we can learn from it.

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