

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Thursday, June 12, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder Alex Caruso

Practice Day

Q. After going over film, what stood out most from yesterday's game?

ALEX CARUSO: I think Indiana played better for the majority of the game. I think we had stretches where we played good. I think we played on their terms more than we played on our terms of how we wanted the game to be and to flow.

I think that was apparent just with the runs that they went on when they played well. They were nine-, 10-, 12-point runs. Ours were more six-, seven-point runs. I think that's probably the thing that stood out the most.

Q. You've been in this position in Denver. What is the first adjustment for tomorrow?

ALEX CARUSO: I think just the competitive greatness for this team has to be at an all-time high. To be able to go on the road and win a game is a difficult thing in the Playoffs, but especially staring 3-1 down in the face. You got to really get your mind right and get ready for the preparation that it's going to take to go out there and compete for 48 minutes and get the win.

Q. Ten turnovers for Shai and Jalen between them. Is it easy to correct that?

ALEX CARUSO: I'll have to go back and actually look at the actual turnovers. I'm not sure where they came from, the specific plays.

Yeah, I think that's an abnormal game for them. I think their norm all year has been to take care of the ball and get us great shots as a team. I expect them to find that form again.

Q. Were you surprised by the level of intensity of their defense?

ALEX CARUSO: No. I thought, like I said, there were stretches where we kind of dominated the game and



played the way we wanted to, particularly on the defensive end. I think that they just did a better job, and maybe that's coming back home, they had a little more juice, a little more pop.

But I think for the most part when we did what we wanted to do, we executed how we wanted to play, it was good for us.

Q. Obviously you're the only one with NBA Finals experience on your team. Has the experience of being in the Finals kind of been similar to what you felt in the bubble or completely different?

ALEX CARUSO: Yeah, I think the real difference is just that I was in my third year in the NBA, and two of those were on a two-way. I was learning a lot at the time. That was my first playoff run. That was the first time I'd been to the Playoffs, the year we won the championship.

I think going through a couple of seasons in between that and losing in the Playoffs, getting to the Playoffs, now here, being on this stretch run again, getting here, having a chance to win it, just my knowledge of the game and my understanding of the situations.

I relied a lot on the veteran team that we had the year we won the championship. We had multiple guys, 10, 15 years in the league. That's an astounding number.

I think being on the other side of that now, being the guy who has had the most experience, trying to give the guys the right mindset and the right course corrections is probably the biggest difference.

Q. What makes them such an effective defense in transition?

ALEX CARUSO: I think it starts with their offense. I think they do a good job of putting teams behind the ball, putting teams in actions, whether they're chasing and maybe not influencing.

From there, they usually get good shots and efficient shots. Even then, if they're not, they have you moved around to where it's not the same scenario where you're breaking

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out. Some of that also, they do a good job of getting back and loading to the ball. A couple times last night, I'm bringing it up and there's a guy in each gap. There's nowhere to find a crease early in the possession.

I think it probably starts with their offense, people not influencing enough on what they're doing.

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