

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Friday, June 13, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Mark Daigneault

Game 4: Postgame

Oklahoma City Thunder 111, Indiana Pacers 104

Q. Indy won every quarter but the fourth. That's the first time you've won a fourth quarter all series. What changed in the fourth for you guys?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I just thought we showed great will in the game. I thought we really hung in there in the third. I thought that was the key to the game. They really had the wind to their back. We had some deflating plays. It was an easy game to give up on. We kept it in striking distance, 8, 10, then able to close it in the fourth.

I thought Lu in particular set an unbelievable tone defensively in the fourth quarter. That was kind of contagious. But his energy, he was just on it and was very impressive. Got great performances from a lot of guys. I thought he really kind of swung the game with his approach when he went back in the game.

Q. Down four with a few minutes left, kind of felt like your season was on the line there. What did you see from Shai to get you home?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I mean, he's unreal. Obviously really closed that thing offensively. He and Dub did a great job there just execution-wise, the shot-making. He was outstanding.

But I just thought the whole team. That was an uphill game against a great team. This is one of the best teams in the league in the last couple months, since All-Star break. They're a hard team to beat here. They're a hard team to beat, period. I thought we gutted it out on a night when we didn't have a lot going, especially offensively.

Q. It looked like everything was hard, even when you were producing points or stopping them. Looked like the whole night was just hard.

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I mean, they're a great team. Again, one of the best teams since All-Star break. They've



been on an incredible run in these Playoffs. They played with unbelievable confidence, competitiveness. I just thought they were super physical on the perimeter again tonight with their pressure and made the game very difficult on us.

I thought we were able to tap into that in the fourth quarter, especially on the defensive end.

Q. Last couple minutes of the game their offense didn't really get much going. What did you see from your guys to take them out of their actions?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Really good execution. Made them earn everything. Just like competitive will. I just thought we showed great will tonight. Lu, Chet, Caruso was huge obviously, K-Rich gave us huge minutes, Dub, all those guys.

On the defensive end especially, I thought we really made them earn everything. Came up with the ball. Executed on offense.

Q. On the defensive end, Chet down the stretch continually in those switches working on their guards. How confident are you when he draws one of those assignments? What did you see from him out there tonight?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: He held up great. We don't do that a ton with him because he's just so impactful at the rim. But he can really switch. It's funny, when he was coming out of the draft, that was one of the things that they really recognized with him, is that he's very switchable. He's got great feet.

We just found ourselves behind the ball in a lot of plays tonight. The switching was able to get that under control late. We can't do that unless he can do that. He was outstanding tonight.

Q. You mentioned in your previous Shai answer that you felt him and Jalen really executed offensively. He did score 15 of your final 16. Are you talking about getting the switches you wanted? How specifically would you say they executed really well?

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MARK DAIGNEAULT: Getting us to good spots, getting us into offense against pressure. They just played that two-man game for the majority of the stretch. Jalen did a great job of getting us organized there, getting the ball too him. He obviously delivered big-time.

Q. Besides your defense, do you think the free throws played a little bit of a factor in throwing off the rhythm for a team that depends on pace, as much as the Pacers do?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Well, there were a crap ton of fouls. That's why there were a crap ton of free throws. I thought the refs did a good job tonight. Both teams shot a lot of free throws. It was physical. That was what the game was. It was a physical game on both ends of the floor for both teams.

Q. You mentioned in the third quarter it felt like they had the wind at their back. At one point they went up 10. You have a very young team. Probably the biggest moment a lot of them have been in. How impressed were you that they didn't let go of the rope?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I'm always impressed by our team. Great poise, great confidence, great connection. The communication on the bench I thought was outstanding. Most of the guys that weren't playing I thought...J Will had an unbelievable voice tonight in a lot of those huddles.

When you're on the road like that, it's just you. That's your unit. Those guys did a great job staying in it because that was a hard game, a hard game for us. We could just not get a lot going, especially the third. Just to hang in there, just kind of showed who we are.

I didn't think it was anything different from what we've been, but we definitely showed who we were in that situation.

Q. All season long you have prioritized the paint to be kind of recession proof. What did you see in terms of the resolve and the game plan commitment your guys had even when shots were going in for them and weren't for you?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I thought we kind of manufactured that win with the defense down the stretch certainly. Paint defense, second-chance points, we were 3-for-17 from three. But we got to the paint ourselves. Like I said, just kind of scraped enough together to win the game.

You got to be able to win games like that. It's not always

going to be pretty, especially in the Playoffs, against great team on the road.

Q. You mentioned Alex in passing, but he scores 20, hits seven of nine shots. In addition to all the defense, what about his game tonight maybe helped not only young guys but the tangibles?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: No, I mean, he's a competitive monster clearly. He's proven that time and again over his career. Certainly in these Playoffs.

He was huge tonight. Offensively even early in the game. But yeah, both ends, help on ball. I can't say enough about him as a competitor.

Q. What is Shai's demeanor like at the end of games like that?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Same demeanor as always. You really wouldn't know whether he's up three, down three, up 30, down 30, eating dinner on a Wednesday. He's pretty much the same guy.

It's unbelievable. He really didn't have it going a lot of the night. He was laboring. We had a hard time shaking him free. For him to be able to flip the switch like that and get the rhythm he got just speaks to how great of a player he is.

Again, it's nothing we don't know. But he definitely showed who he is tonight.

Q. What do you attribute that to?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: That's him. You got to ask him. He's got a great temperament. He's always been like that as long as he's been here. We've lost 40-point games and worse. He's been the same guy. He's just got an unbelievable command over himself. I think his poise and his confidence is contagious among the team and has been for five years.

I mentioned Dort. His physicality, his competitiveness. Those two guys over the last five years, that's what they provide us, and that's what they gave us tonight. They were huge.

Q. For people who haven't necessarily followed this team closely, speak to what SGA and Jalen Williams, how huge they were?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: Yeah, I just thought we really slammed the door on games for a lot of the season. We've done a really good job. In Games 1 and 3, we didn't do a

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good job of it.

That was kind of our best rhythm of the night is the stretch. Those guys had a lot to do with. So we've got to get better now. That's a really good team that has really found some solutions against us. As we go home, we have to evaluate things on both ends of the floor.

In the meantime, that was just like a great blood-and-guts win.

Q. You went back to the big lineup and didn't get off to a very good start. You went back to it twice more. What did you like about it?

MARK DAIGNEAULT: I mean, that lineup has very distinct strengths. You can draw on it at different times. It was a point to get Hart more minutes tonight. I thought he's been helpful in his minutes.

But in terms of the lineup, I mean, we go into every game trying to figure out the formula to win that game. That's what we thought was best to win Game 4 tonight.

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