

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Monday, June 16, 2025

Indiana Pacers Rick Carlisle

Game 5: Pregame

Q. In 2011, you had Game 5 at home, not having home-court advantage because of the 2-3-2 setup. Out of curiosity is there a difference in rest or preference in the 2-2-1-1-1 that you would notice being in this situation now?

RICK CARLISLE: Well, the 2-3-2 came into effect I believe in the '85 Finals. I believe it was an effort to reduce travel for media, was one of the big reasons. And as the years have gone on, I think the league has seen that the purest form of a seven-game series is to go 2-2-1-1-1. I was actually on the Competition Committee, I forget what year it was, when this came up. It was voted to return to 2-2-1-1-1. I believe Sam Presti was on the committee with me as well.

We're fortunate in this series. Travel is pretty reasonable. Not a long distance. Not a long flight. But I do believe it's a better circumstance for the overall integrity of the competition.

Q. And along the same lines, what sort of benefit, if any, is it that a lot of times in the playoffs, you do get two days between games, as opposed to the regular season? Do you think it helps the product this time of year? And plus, everybody is kind of worn down at this point, anyway. Does it just help to have a little bit more time sometimes?

RICK CARLISLE: We like the schedule, whatever the schedule is, we like it. If it's every other day like it was in the New York series, we like it.

You know, that was a 13-day series. This is an 18-day series. The Finals, the NBA Finals is one of the great stages in all of sports, and so you know, it should be -- it shouldn't happen quickly and abruptly. It should happen at the right pace and the right tempo, and the space in between games does help player health. You know, that's a very important aspect of it. So you know, this has been a long 10 or 11 days or whatever it is, but it's gone -- it's also gone quickly.



Q. You take Bennedict Mathurin, he was huge for you in Game 3. Kind of had some hiccups down the stretch in Game 4. Do you talk to a player who is that young in his career and that young in his playoffs experience to kind of reset him in a shape or form, or do you expect big things out of him in Game 5?

RICK CARLISLE: We talk to our players all the time. It's important to get the right messaging, the correct messaging. At this point, even though Ben is a young player in his third year, and even though he didn't play in the playoffs last year, he's had a lot of experience in this playoffs. There have been new experiences, new ups and downs, those kinds of things.

So the important thing is to try to give him the correct guidance and the correct things to focus on, and be very process-oriented.

Q. How does the coaching staff use the extra day between games? Do you do twice as much work or is there only so much film-watching and data crunching that you can do between two games?

RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, at this point, the extra time allows extra analysis. So we spent a lot of time looking at the previous game, and many cases, looking at other games that were previous. Sometimes you look at stuff during the regular season, etc., etc.

But I don't think there's a big difference between how much film we're looking at with a two-day break as there is a one-day break. I think every coaching staff in the NBA is going to be on top of it as best they can, they are going to look at everything, and try not to overanalyze.

Q. You're someone who supports women's basketball. The WNBA season is not that old, and it's crazy to see even though we are in the Finals how much people are paying attention, which is not so usual when we are in the Finals that people recognize what's going on with the WNBA. Can you maybe say something about it, how beautiful it is that we finally see that both can have the same stage and people pay attention what's going on in the WNBA?

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RICK CARLISLE: Yeah, I've become a big follower of the WNBA. I have close relationships with some other head coaches in the W, along with Stephanie White.

I watched almost every Fever game last year. I think all -- just about all of them were on National TV. And I'm following the entire league very closely. It's great basketball. There are things that can be learned by NBA staffs and players watching the W because the dynamics of their game are a little different. The footwork elements of it are very, very high level. And you know, the personalities, they are coming at you all the time. It's very fun. It's very fun to follow.

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