

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Monday, June 16, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Jalen Williams

Game 5: Postgame



Oklahoma City Thunder 120, Indiana Pacers 109

Q. Mark was talking about stretches during the season where you were trying to establish this sort of force. He said there were ugly games, ugly plays. What do you remember from those times and what they meant for you to have as much force as you played with tonight?

JALEN WILLIAMS: In order to get better and being good in these moments, and by no means am I perfect in these moments, you're able to generate good habits when you have the right way of going about it and you have a process.

I'm extremely fortunate that I have a coach and a staff and teammates that allow me to have those ugly plays during the year and figure out my game.

I think right now it's paid off, to be honest. Just like I understand the level of physicality I have to do in order to be good. Yeah, like I said, I'm just extremely fortunate that I have a coach that allowed me to go through that process of figuring out what I'm good at and just like what I need to do in order to be successful. That's kind of how I view that process.

Q. You're still a young guy. 40 points in a Finals game to go up 3-2. What sort of a statement do you think this type of performance makes for you?

JALEN WILLIAMS: My answer's going to suck because it's kind of going to negate your question.

It's something more that I'll, like, look back on later than worry about what kind statement it makes. I think the only statement we have right now is we're up 3-2 and we have to still go earn another win.

It will be cool to look back on later on. Hopefully down the line I'll have, like, a more fun answer for you.

Q. Was there a point tonight where you felt like you had it cooking, could take control of this game?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I wouldn't say take control. I'm just out there being aggressive. Like I said, I have a staff and teammates that allow me to do that, figure out my game and just figure out spots where I can try and be dynamic. A lot of that is just me trying to pick my spots and do what I can in order to win the game.

Not every game's going to be 40 or 25. It's kind of like doing whatever it takes to win the game.

Q. What did you think of the fans tonight, the energy they gave you guys?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Typical. Typical night for us. Very loud. Extremely loud. It feels like the court is shaking when we're here. They give us that boost we need. Felt like they were standing the whole entire game. They were into the game. Which is rare for a crowd. I think Indy was that way, too. So, it's been two really cool atmospheres to be in.

But it was so loud here. I remember I was trying to yell a coverage to Lu. He was two feet away and we can't hear each other.

Definitely a special thing to be part of Oklahoma, the team, how well the fans embrace us. For them to be outside the gate at 2, 3 a.m. and greet us, be excited, it's super dope. That's special. That's something we're definitely playing for, we always have in the back of our mind how lucky we are and I am to be here. It's a dope atmosphere.

Q. Chet talked about how important it was to give you your flowers. Shai also had a similar sentiment. A lot has been made about this team chemistry. How does that team chemistry empower you to be great? How did that help out tonight?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Yeah, like I said, I'm just blessed to be in a situation where everybody wants everybody to succeed. It's such a rare thing. I think it's even more rare that we're playing the Pacers who just looking on the outside are kind of that way, too. You see how close-knit



they are.

But yeah, I'm just in a really, really good situation that's allowed me to grow as a player at a more rapid rate because I'm not worried about what if I fail. I know I have guys that pick me up when I fall short. I try and do the same thing for them. I think our team chemistry's something that's got us here, kept us strong.

Yeah, it's just a fortunate situation that I get to be in.

Q. You shot well from the field, 12 free throws. You talked a lot about trying to get more free throws. Is that what playing with force got you tonight?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I think the playing with force, yes, it puts pressure on officials to make a call. At the same time like halfway through the year, this was part of me and Mark talking about what it's going to take. I was figuring out my game a lot of it was not just looking for a foul, being able to finish through contact.

From there, if you finish through contact and make the shot, you don't really need the foul. That's kind of the way I've been approaching it. Being aggressive, getting to the rim, playing through a lot of the contact. If it's a foul or not. If it is a foul, then great. Just the kind of force that I play with on a daily basis is what I think gets me to the line. Some nights I won't go to the line and still got to finish.

Q. There have only been eight other players 24 or younger in the NBA Finals that have scored 40 points. What was your reaction to that?

JALEN WILLIAMS: We won the game, so that was cool. I won't really have much of a reaction until we handle business. Like I said, somewhere down the line, ask me the question again and I'll have a better answer for you.

Q. In Game 4 you only made three threes as a team. Tonight, you have four different guys, including yourself, make three threes at least. How important was that spacing in terms of opening up driving lanes for yourself and Shai?

JALEN WILLIAMS: We just have special players on our team. When they're hitting shots, it obviously opens up another realm for us. Even when they don't hit shots, just about them being aggressive. They've done a good job all year of playing that spot, being ready to make plays and stuff like that.

Obviously like the threes are nice, but just them being out there being aggressive, playing on the catch, doing that sort of thing, opens up a lot. Like I said, Wiggins' role is

very, very difficult to sometimes not play, to play, come in and make shots, make big plays, be solid defensively. There's a lot that goes into that. Case-o the same way. To not shoot well and come in and make big shot over and over again tonight, it's something that goes under the radar. But they're special players that are ready for the moment. It just adds more and more space to what we're trying to do.

Q. The third quarter you were able to go off the way you did. What is that moment like? Quiet in your head? Are you hyped up?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Honestly, it feels so much different than a regular-season game. I didn't even really notice that I had it going. I was just playing so hard that everything else in the game seems like second to what's going on.

That's how it feels, so I wouldn't even say I was in a flow state. I was kind of like absorbed in the game so much that I'm not really thinking about how many points I have or how many times I've scored. I'm just into the game.

Q. You talked about what last year's Playoff run did for you guys, the Denver series. For you personally, could you foresee having this type of game at this type of stage?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I think first the biggest game thing, I've gotten kind of numb to. Every time we play in the Finals, it's the biggest game of your life. You know what I mean? I think that's given me a little more comfort in playing hard, playing aggressive.

I think just to understand the opportunity that we have I just try to play as hard as I can. Whatever happens after that is where the chips fall. But I'd be lying if I said I could imagine doing what I did tonight. I definitely could have seen myself here a long time ago, I just didn't think it would happen this fast and I didn't think it would be with a group of guys that I truly am grateful to be around.

Q. You mentioned the things that Cason and Aaron do that go underrated. What about the character that they bring to this team, things that don't show up on the stat sheet?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Case-o picks up 94 feet the whole game. That in itself is a lot. I think another thing that goes under the radar, before I talk with Wiggins, is if you go back and look at these guys in college, they're not doing some of the stuff that they're asked to do here on a nightly basis. So for them to be able to change their game. This is Case-o's second year. For him to be able to change his game into something we need takes a lot of maturity.

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Same for Wiggs. To come in and have to make shots right away, that's a hard task, something he's gotten really good at. It makes him such a special basketball player.

I'm not going to go through the whole team. That's the culture of our whole team. Everybody is ready to do whatever it takes to win. We have a very mature group in regards to knowing what to do and knowing when to plug in. I think everybody's really selfless. Everybody is really selfless and is willing to plug away at something for the better of the team. It kind of trickles down from everybody.

Q. To see the pressure from Indiana's ball up the court, how important is it for Isaiah Hartenstein to set the screens to give you guys that room down the court?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I bet Zay is probably tired of screening for me. He's been doing it a lot for me this year.

It's a good pressure release. He does a good job ever not getting illegals too on it. Just over the course of the game, honestly you have to tip your hat to Indiana for continuing to press and doing that. Anytime you have a pressure release for it, it just opens up space, helps you get up the court.

It's not like we don't have a reinvent the wheel on it. Just kind of like that's what's needed. He does a good job. Chet the same thing. Some of the guards sometimes. Kind of who is in it, understanding what we're trying to get done on the offensive end.

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