NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

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Oklahoma City Thunder
Isaiah Hartenstein
Practice Day

Q. It seemed like all the defensive switches were clean in the first half. Limited them from getting that ball whipping around. Is that something you saw on film and really made an emphasis on making the switches quicker and cleaner?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I think in general, all our coverages, I think we knew we had to be a little better. Coming into the game watching film, we knew there was lots we could improve from Game 4.

Mark said if we would have lost that game by one, we really would have been looking at that game like we left a lot of points on the table. That was just a big emphasis for us, to be cleaner on the defensive coverages, be cleaner where we want to send certain people. I think we did a lot better job in that.

Q. How do you deal with the excitement when you are a few hours away from the game that could win you a ring?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I think the main thing is just approaching it, not like every other game, but we're not looking at it as if we win, we win a championship. We're focusing on Game 6. We still want to come out with the same desperation as the Pacers are going to come out with. That's the biggest thing. We're not changing, not looking too far ahead. We just have to focus on the present moment. I think that kind of takes away the anxiety.

Q. This is your second straight year playing against Tyrese Haliburton in the playoffs. What is different when he is off the floor for the Pacers? How do you prepare for a game like that?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: We're preparing as if he's going to play. That's what we're focused on. It's the Finals. The same thing last series where people were sick, people said I'm going to play. We're just focusing on that he's going to play.

If he doesn't play, we're ready regardless. I think we're just focused on that.

Q. Looking back to the summer, in your conversations with Sam [Presti], I imagine making the move, you're trying to compete for a title with this team, but it doesn't seem like Sam has used that word a lot, the idea of a championship. What role has his phrasing and the way he's treated that played into getting you guys here?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I think the biggest thing with the organization is that we're very present and focused with a 0-0 mentality probably almost every interview. That's been huge for us. Even now I think as a team we're just focusing on Game 6, we're not focusing on if we win what happens. We're not focusing on whatever outside of it.

You're going to have a lot of media, talking about media family, talking about if we win, blah, blah, blah. We're focusing on Game 6. We're going to come out with desperation. We're going to come out flying. We're not going to ease into it. I think that's the main thing.

Q. You were a second-round pick, played in the G League, cut, traded, etc. Now you're one win away from a championship. Does it feel real? What did you learn from all those experiences that helps you today?

ISAIAH HARTENSTEIN: I mean, in general we're not really focusing on 'what if' something happens. We're really focusing on the present moment, focusing on we still got to go win Game 6, we have to have that desperation and not act like we already won something.

It's the first to four, not the first to three. So that's kind of where we're focusing on.

Again, I think the journey was great. I think a lot of people can learn from it. I think there's a lot of ups and downs. There's a lot of figuring out, changing roles, figuring out how to establish yourself in the NBA. I think that's the biggest thing when you're talking about your ego.

For me, I mean, starting off in the NBA, seeing a lot of

different players that were really talented but weren't able to look at themselves, let the ego go, do what was best for their career. I had to change the way I played, figure out what I could do to consistently get a niche in the NBA. I think I kind of found that.

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