

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

Saturday, June 21, 2025

Oklahoma City Thunder

Jalen Williams

Practice Day

Q. You've matched up a little bit with Pascal Siakam off and on through the series. What makes him a tough cover and what have you come to appreciate that maybe you don't know from this kind of repeated exposure?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I wouldn't say I learned anything new, except when you don't guard somebody all season, you kind of figure things out. But he's physical. He's skilled. When you put those two things together, it's hard to deal with, for sure.

I think the biggest thing for me is he was taller than I thought coming into the NBA, I guess. That's not really like a shock now. But when you're tall, physical and obviously when you've been through this Finals process a couple times, just the playoffs over your career, you get better, and a lot of moments don't really rattle you.

He's been a tough cover. But it's been really fun to go up against him every game and kind of have that battle.

Q. Coming in, everybody talked about a lack of deep playoff experience for you guys but the biggest mismatch in experience is on the coaching bench, Carlisle versus Mark. What have you liked during this playoff run and how much pressure is on him to coach well in a Game 7?

JALEN WILLIAMS: I have very mixed thoughts about this question. I don't ever worry about Mark not being prepared for a moment. The way he attacks basketball from a coaching standpoint is the same way I approach basketball, which is why we have a lot of respect for each other.

I'm not too worried about the experience there. Obviously Rick is another great, probably Hall of Fame coach. I think Mark is also getting better coaching against him, the same way we would as we get deeper into this run. I feel like just from the playoffs, lack of deep Finals experience, we're probably about as deep into the Finals as you can get, a



Game 7.

I'm never worried about Mark and what's going on with him. At the end of the day, Mark is not going to have to make shots on Sunday. It's more about how we can carry out his game plan and do that.

Q. You guys played a Game 7 a month ago against Denver. You told us afterward, you didn't sleep very much the night before. I'm wondering what did you learn from that Game 7 experience? So many of you don't have Game 7 experiences. I know this is a whole other level, but what did you learn from that and what do you hope translates tomorrow?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Try to go to bed a little earlier.

The other part, too, is just like you can't really -- the swings of a game, I feel like, in a Game 7 feel so much louder than they do in any other game, except maybe apart from an elimination game.

I feel like tomorrow they will feel a little different, too, just because obviously this is last game of the season, this is for the championship. What Game 7 taught me from Denver is the swings, three feels like you're down ten, you know what I mean? One feels like you're down five. That's just like the swing of a game, and what is going on feels much larger. It's about honing in your emotion and understanding the state of the game is big for Game 7.

Q. I think the last time the NBA had a Game 7 in the Finals, you might have been 14 years old in 2016. In your third year, you have so many more experiences you have yet to experience but can you appreciate that this is going down in history that win or lose, you're part of NBA lore? I think there's only been five Game 7s in the past 35 years.

JALEN WILLIAMS: Yeah, it sucks, I probably can't appreciate it until I get the outcome I want.

It's cool, though. Somewhere down the line, win or lose, it will be cool to have your name etched in history regardless what's going on. That's cool. But right now, it's very difficult to look into that.

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

But I'm also grateful for the opportunity. That's one thing I can say is throughout the whole entire thing, you always have to remain grateful for where you are because there's a lot of NBA players that will trade their spot with me right now. That's how I look at it.

But as far as history, I want to be on the good side of that, for sure.

Q. Mark talks a lot about trying to keep things straightforward and simple, so as a team you guys are not thinking out there. You are playing instinctually and with great force. Can you take me inside about how you guys have gone about that over time and obviously need to have that again tomorrow?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Over time we've had a good process about it. We've had some slippage. Try to get back to that. But tomorrow is like a do-or-die situation, so I don't doubt that we won't have that. I think we have done a good job just building a muscle. We've talked about that all year. Those games that people don't think matter, when you're playing late December on a Tuesday night and you're not even on TV, those games, the ones that you can really build a habit there, I think we have done a good job of that all year. We'll have to do it one more time.

Q. You were like 15 years old when the last Game 7 of the Finals was played. What do you remember from those games, if you do, and what do you remember from those games that gets you excited about playing tomorrow?

JALEN WILLIAMS: Who was in the Finals then?

Q. Cavs/Warriors.

JALEN WILLIAMS: I don't remember that to be honest. 15, I was probably at an AAU tournament or something playing.

The biggest thing from the Finals is I remember a lot of the stuff surrounding it. I don't remember the games. When you're 15, I feel like you miss a lot of what's going on. You're more worried about your favorite player. Kobe wasn't playing, so I didn't really care.

But I just remember the buzz and everybody choosing a side. Which is why I think it's really cool that I've had this experience in Oklahoma, where you're driving down the city and there's paintings of "Thunder Up," or walking into Target and there's people face painted and the game is not even today and you can see the bars are full every game and we're packing out the stadium when we're not here.

That's a lot of the stuff I'll really remember. That's a lot of stuff that I remember during that run, during that Finals time.

Q. I'd imagine that through the course of your career when you had that growth spurt you had to adjust your game and again in the NBA once you put on all that muscle to your frame. Is this the best you've felt in terms of the balance of your actual basketball game and your physique?

JALEN WILLIAMS: My physique, for sure. My physique, for sure.

Basketball-wise, yeah. I think I just feel myself getting better throughout the Finals and just throughout the year, which is always a good feeling. Even when I struggle, even for me, at least, there's been a lot of positivity behind how I've been struggling when I was. I think throughout the year I've gotten way better. But physically I feel really good. Lets me know what I did last summer to get my body in shape for this and what I've been able to do to maintain it throughout the year has been a big one. I've been good at that.

Q. You mentioned the face-painting fans, and you compare it to like a high school football deal. What's the feeling like Game 7 starts with the crowd and the atmosphere and what do you anticipate for tomorrow?

JALEN WILLIAMS: It makes the hair on your arms stand up a little bit. You're anxious going into it. Honestly, it's a little indescribable because I haven't -- it's hard to give a good answer because this Game 7 is going to be completely different from the last one we played in.

But from a fan perspective, I can't imagine it won't be anything short of incredibly loud. Obviously they are going to be anxious, too. We are very close to finishing the job, but very close doesn't get you far unless you finish it. I'm excited to see how much the city shows out. Probably have a different energy than it's ever had. I'm excited for that.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports