

NBA Finals: Thunder vs. Pacers

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Indiana Pacers

Tyrese Haliburton

Practice Day



Q. Last Game 7 in the Finals, Cavs against Warriors, LeBron James against Steph Curry. You always said you're a LeBron fan. What do you remember from that day?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: The day I don't necessarily remember. I remember where I was. I remember what the game was, the energy of the game, being with my friends and watching it all together. There's a mixture of Cavs fans, a mixture of Warriors fans.

I think that's probably one of the greatest games I've ever been able to watch as a basketball fan. That's what makes Game 7 so fun.

I think that especially for people around my age, that is the peak Game 7. I'm excited to add to the storied history of Game 7s and add to the history of our game.

Q. They have obviously been really good at home all throughout the playoffs and you guys have played a couple games in this building. How would you describe it, sort of trying to win a game here, and how do you overcome the home-court advantage they have been having so far?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I think like I said over and over, the controllables are the most important thing here, taking care of the ball, rebounding, playing with the right energy. I think something that's an underrated aspect of the game of basketball is momentum. When you're on your home floor and you make a tough shot or have an alley-oop dunk or make a highlight play of some sort that gets the crowd involved, that momentum goes your way. I feel like we have that with our home-court advantage, as well, in Indy. They have that here. You've got to be able to weather the storm with those momentum-swinging plays, try to create momentum-stopping plays when you're on the road. That's important as well.

But I think just controlling what we can is the most important thing.

Q. How did you come out of Game 7 physically, and what have you had to do over the last two or three days to maintain the condition with the calf?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I'm pretty much in the same standpoint I was before Game 6. A little stiff, a little sore, rather. Good thing I only had to play like 23 minutes. I've been able to get even more treatment and do more things.

Just trying to take care of it the best I can. But I'll be ready to go for Game 7.

Q. We've been here for the last seven games asking you a bunch of questions. But during the games, we do the play-by-play for ESPN in Portuguese. After you hit the game winner in Game 1, I said, there's something special about those Pacers. I'm trying to figure out what is so special about the Pacers. What is so special about those Pacers?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I think as a group we've just been very resilient throughout the playoffs. We're a group of guys that get along really well and are trying to do something special. I think the expectations for this group from an external viewpoint coming into the year weren't very high. They weren't very high coming into the playoffs. They weren't very high going into the second round of the playoffs. They weren't very high going into the third round. They weren't very high now.

I think we just have done a great job of just staying together. There's not a group of guys I'd rather go to war with. I'm really excited to compete with these guys in a Game 7, and it's going to be a lot of fun.

Q. A lot of naysayers coming into the series about what to expect. From the outside looking in, how would you rate this series? Obviously one more big chapter to write, but great games, thoroughly entertaining and ultra competitive.

TYRESE HALIBURTON: Yeah, I won't be able to give you a real rating until it's over (laughing).

I think that this has been a joy to compete against these

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guys and play in this environment. I'm having a lot of fun with what I'm doing and what we're doing as a group. As a basketball player and being a part of it, it's been a lot of fun. I would assume from a basketball fan's perspective, it's been a joy to watch. I think that's the good part about this series.

Q. Last year your defense was seventh worst in the league in terms of efficiency and this year went up to 19th. In the last month of the season, you're the ninth best. But when you see your efficiency in the series, it's better than Oklahoma City's as a defense. And when you look at your games against the top-10 teams in the league in the regular season, the No. 1 was Indiana and Oklahoma City was third. How do you explain for the bigger games, your defense turns it up 15 notches?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I think we do a great job sticking with our system, not trying to move it from game to game. I think Jim (Boyles) and Jennie (Boucek), who run our defense, have done a great job of establishing our blueprint into what we do. And we're competitive guys. We want to compete against the best.

I think the buy-in from our group has been amazing. Obviously Drew, Aaron and Myles kind of set the tone for what we do defensively. Pascal has been on elite defensive teams before. I feel like I've really taken a big step on the defensive end myself personally. We have a lot of guys who want to compete on that end.

I think last year we could score the ball really well, but we couldn't stop anybody. I think we have just done a good job of buying in on that end and that's brought more success. But there's still a lot to go.

Q. Following up on the question about the crazy run, the comebacks that you've been involved with, how have they become part of your team identity? You guys never talk about lack of respect or anything. I guess the identity question, and then also, maybe why you guys are not outwardly talking about, we deserve respect?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I think from our group, as far as the comebacks and stuff, we have done a really good job of staying at games for 48 minutes, not giving up, understanding that no lead is really safe in the NBA. Just continuing to fight through the course of games. That's become part of our identity.

As far as outward calls for respect, respect isn't something that we can just talk about and receive. It's an earned thing. I still think no matter what happens, it's still probably

not going to be where necessarily it "should" be or what we think it should be. It doesn't really matter, though. I think from our standpoint -- teams we compete against, they respect us. I think that's the most important thing.

As far as what the media has to say about our group, it is what it is. We are in a great, great point right now in our organization's history and for our team specifically. You've got to be really excited about the chance to compete in one game to win a championship.

So just looking forward to that. I think all the outside narratives and all those things, they come with winning and they come with success. We've got the ultimate test coming up, and I'm really excited about it.

Q. For the past three Game 7s in the Finals, LeBron won twice, Kobe won once. So knowing those names, Kobe Bryant, LeBron James, if you guys win, do you feel like it will be an honor to be on that list?

TYRESE HALIBURTON: I think the important part about winning the championship is you've got your name in history as a group. I think that's the most important thing.

As far as thinking about anything like that, I don't really think about what's to come after the game, success or not. Just really focused on Game 7 and trying to take it just a moment at a time. Really enjoying what we're doing. Understanding this is going to be one of the biggest, if not the biggest game most of us ever play in in our lives, and for our organization from a historical standpoint, as well. That's something that you don't take for granted and you enjoy as a competitor.

So I'm really looking forward to it.

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