

NBA Finals: Knicks vs. Spurs

Tuesday, June 2, 2026

New York Knicks

Coach Mike Brown

Media Day



Q. Is Mitchell going to practice today? I know he's been pushing to play tomorrow. What do you expect he'll be listed?

MIKE BROWN: I don't know what he'll be listed on the injury report. He did individual stuff yesterday. I'm about to talk to our medical people to see what he can do today.

Q. Mike, how much of your defensive philosophy was formed when you were here in San Antonio, not from Coach Pop, but from your incredible six-man flag football first grade Dawgs defense that you defined?

MIKE BROWN: We were awesome. He was offensive coordinator; I was the defensive coordinator. We actually dominated that league. We had a cheer, all our parents. After every game and before every game, we'd get our parents in with the kids, our cheer would be, "Who let the dogs out? Who, who, who? Who let the dogs out? Who, who, who?"

They're adults now, right? For all you older Dawgs, back in the day, that were six and seven, now 30 [laughter].

A lot came from there. But my players won't do that cheer for some reason, my current players [smiling].

Q. Pop's influence...

MIKE BROWN: Man, there's a ton. There's a ton on the court. There's a ton off the court. He was very influential in my life at the time, not just professionally but personally as well.

The biggest thing is just to stay the course, keep trying to grow and keep trying to learn. Make sure you try to keep everybody, not just your 15 or 18 players, but however many players you have and everybody in the organization and around the city, try to keep them as connected as possible.

Q. There's a pretty quick point guard on the other

team that you have some history with. Wasn't that long ago. What do you remember about your time coaching him? What does it mean to see him on this stage?

MIKE BROWN: Lovely, lovely family. Fantastic wife in Recee. Just comes from a great family. A great human being, first of all. I enjoyed my team being around him as a human, first.

Just talented. Sky's the limit for him. He can give it to you on both ends of the floor. He's a game-changer. Obviously in big moments he knows how to come up big. That's evident with his clutch Player of the Year award that he had won.

Fantastic player. Fantastic human being.

Q. When you first took this job from the outside, the perception was Mike Brown has to develop the bench, the starters were getting run into the ground. How much of that was a conversation through the interview process? How was that in application when Josh Hart goes from 38 to 28, the process of putting the starters back, developing a longer bench? Seems like it was rocky moments through the season, but it got you here.

MIKE BROWN: First of all, there's always rocky moments during the course of the season. That's what the season's there for.

I actually hoped there would be some big, rocky times or adverse times because you have to try to fight through them as an organization, not just as a team, but as an organization, to see if everybody can stay connected during those times.

Getting to the Finals is not easy. If you can navigate through some of those adverse or tough times throughout the season, you'll give yourself a chance when it really matters, which is the postseason.

In terms of the minutes, it's a philosophy I had. One of the many things I learned from Pop and Steve [Kerr]. Steve was really good at trying to play a lot of different guys. Not

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only that, a guy that hadn't been in the rotation for a while, one game he might throw him out there as a starter. That kept guys engaged or on their toes, however you want to call it.

Then at the end of the day, I'm not a medical person, but just from what medical people say, if you can kind of control the minutes during the regular season, it helps them during the postseason.

From people telling me that, I believe it. That's what I tried to do.

Q. I know it's been half a lifetime since the last time you were a head coach in the Finals. When you look back at your journey, how much did you need to go through that, the lessons that came? How do you think that helped shape the next 20 years of your coaching life, 19 years?

MIKE BROWN: Everything. I'm a firm believer that stuff happens for a reason. I mean, I've enjoyed every single job that I've had.

My time as an assistant under Steve, that was fantastic for a lot of reasons, not just professionally, but personally, too. I had an absolute great time being an assistant coach in San Francisco under Steve, with those players.

Learned a lot of life lessons and professional lessons doing it. Obviously, anybody that was a head coach would want to be a head coach for 30 years until they retire. The pay is a little different [smiling].

At the end of the day, I wouldn't trade anything that I went through along my journey for just being a head coach the whole time because I truly believe this: you learn probably more in adversity or getting knocked down than just riding a high wave.

Again, not just professionally but personally, too. Again, I enjoyed my journey and I wouldn't change it.

Q. Mike, you talked about the alignment with ownership, front office, coaching being so important to reaching this stage. James Dolan has ridden highs and lows over his time. What is the most important thing that he's contributed as part of that alignment?

MIKE BROWN: Just his willingness to challenge us in a respectful way. I mean, it's his team. He's the boss. He's not, I guess, overbearing or around all the time. When he is, we don't always talk about basketball, we talk about other things, too.

He challenges Leon [Rose]. He challenges me. He challenges the players in the right way. You want that from your boss. You want to be challenged, you want to be pushed. There's a way to do it, there's a way not to do it.

My short time around him, he's been fantastic in that area. In the same breath, too, he's adamant if you bring to him what you need, then there's backing with it, he's adamant about trying to give you the best things possible to go get the job done.

I really appreciate my short time being around him, especially with the horizontal and more importantly the vertical alignment this organization has.

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