

NBA Finals: Knicks vs. Spurs

Wednesday, June 3, 2026

San Antonio Spurs

Coach Mitch Johnson

Game 1: Postgame

Knicks 105, Spurs 95

Q. Can you talk about Wembanyama tonight. Seemed like it kind of took him a while to get going. How did you see it?

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, I have to go back and look at the film.

Felt like he missed a few shots early. We got to get him moving in space and toward the rim, whether that's on rolls or running in transition. But we need the pressure on the rim and the force in the paint.

They did a good job of obviously being physical and showing crowds. We need to do a better job of establishing that early on, for sure.

Q. Some of the early on the shot clock threes, what did you think about that?

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I don't have any right now that I felt were egregious. There was definitely a stretch there in the second quarter I know where, we want to play with pace, and we want to hunt threes in transition, but we also want those to be in rhythm and feel like they're our shot. There might have been some questionable ones. I'll have to go back and look at the film.

Again, it gets tough when you get nitpicky with that stuff. We definitely again didn't have enough pressure on the paint all night, whether that was in transition or the half court. We have to make sure we're still putting force in the paint. We'll still get our threes up with that. We can't work outside in. We've got to go more inside out, for sure.

Q. When Wembanyama doesn't play to the best of his very high standards for himself, is anyone harder on him than himself?

MITCH JOHNSON: I don't know how to quantify that, to answer that. I would say that he definitely holds himself



accountable. I expect he'll learn a lot of things from tonight's game and come out with a good approach in Game 2.

Q. Your group has preached all season long about not getting too high, too low. How do you keep the team focused on what the bigger picture is for the Finals?

MITCH JOHNSON: No different. We played a game. We didn't get the outcome we wanted. There will be a lot of feedback from the film, breaking that down, that will lead to Game 2. Hopefully we use that information and tools and guidance to come out and be better that game.

Q. Mitch, knee-jerk 15 minutes after the game, can you diagnose how New York was able to get to 50 points in the paint?

MITCH JOHNSON: Felt like some of that was bad offense on our part. Some of that was maybe at times not being able to square the basketball up and give the proper resistance. Then the offensive rebounds crushed us. 23 second-chance points. We're up one point, 93-94, 94-95, get them to miss. Brunson hits a three, they go on an 11-0 run. Tough. Need to close out rebounds when you make a miss.

Q. Played a lot of downhill guards this postseason. What is about Jalen's game that makes him more difficult to play?

MITCH JOHNSON: He's a tremendous player that's skilled, picks his spots, knows his angles, shoots contested shots without being sped up. He's a phenomenal player. We just got to keep making him work.

Again, he had a phenomenal game. He got going there, had a few in a row. 30 points on 31 shots is something that you probably want to keep making him work for those points. Probably some of the other stuff that we can probably control more than him making or missing shots.

Q. When you guys got up 14 midway through the third, you said before the game the Knicks are a team if there's any undiscipline on the defensive end, they'll exploit it. Do you think a little of that creped in? A



couple possessions where things went too fast?

MITCH JOHNSON: Again, I don't want to make something up. I do know there was a combination of a few times defensive breakdowns, whether it was communication or rotations. There was a few times it felt like we didn't have an appropriate offensive possession in terms of trying to be greedy for our best shot, using spacing and passing, because that's how we play.

It got us on our heels a few times. Again, the offensive rebounds, 23 second-chance points, it's going to be really hard.

Q. Were you good with the looks that you got from beyond the arc?

MITCH JOHNSON: I thought we missed some shots, yeah. I thought we missed some good shots. I think there will be some possessions that, again, we could have worked the clock more, worked them more defensively. That was probably just -- I kind of refer to them as they're just shots. Is it a bad shot, a good shot, I don't really know, but it's just a shot. We probably could be a little bit more greedy on that possession to get something better as a group.

Q. You got some great looks when De'Aaron got two feet in the paint, when Dylan was going baseline. How do you balance that with Wembanyama, making sure he gets the best shot available?

MITCH JOHNSON: I think that's a combination of things. Fox, like you said, got a great spot off of DH and Victor. We continue to play off misses a little bit better as an organization. Victor, getting him going toward the basket more in those situations.

Again, off of everything, missing shots or not, 16 assists for us is not our brand of basketball. Just zoomed all the way out, there's a lot of things that we've discussed in this press conference that we can get better at and clean up. That's something that is not up to the standard, anywhere close to what we're used to and how we play.

Q. The level of physicality seemed good from you guys, especially the guards and the wings hitting the boards in the first half. What trailed off there in the second half?

MITCH JOHNSON: There were some times in terms of offensive rebounds, again, it wasn't like the number was crazy. They had 10 offensive rebounds, 11 if you include the team. We just got to do a better job of cleaning some of those up.

They do a great job of, when they get offensive rebounds, capitalizing on them. That's reflected in the 23 points. We need everybody to finish with the boards. We were a step too late a few times, a step out of position.

Q. Was fatigue a factor tonight? Did you think y'all's playing against Oklahoma City, the turnovers in the fourth quarter? How can you get that repaired?

MITCH JOHNSON: I don't think it was fatigue. I'm sure guys got tired at times, but I didn't feel like anyone's performance was based on fatigue. I think we just need to be sharper and execute better and continue to work the game and not fight it at times and play the right way.

Q. Strange scene with the fan running straight at Victor late in the game. What's going through your head when you see that? How do you think he handled that?

MITCH JOHNSON: I don't think it was an event at all. I thought security got him out of there. I think everybody moved on to the next play.

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