

# NBA Finals: Knicks vs. Spurs

Monday, June 8, 2026

**San Antonio Spurs**

**Coach Mitch Johnson**

Game 3: Postgame



San Antonio Spurs 115, New York Knicks 111

**Q. Kind of coming into this game, you talked about wanting to get back to your brand of basketball. How do you feel like you fared in that endeavor?**

MITCH JOHNSON: I thought we made some strides in terms of the ball movement and playing with our teammates, setting screens, trusting the basketball would find the right guy for our shot.

I thought we showed better poise at times. I thought we finished the game still with some things that need improvement, but stronger than we did the last few games, first two games, excuse me.

I just thought we were in attack mode, but also as a collective group, and I thought it showed itself in terms of something would happen, whether it was an initial action or a guy trying to get to the paint. If they didn't have a clear advantage, they were looking for their teammates. Because we were doing that throughout the night, it was much clearer for the teammates to expect where the ball was going and when it was going to get to them, and then what to do with it when it got to them.

**Q. The second quarter was rough. You were down at halftime. Talk about how you felt at halftime, how the team felt, how they responded in the third quarter?**

MITCH JOHNSON: Just yeah, I mean, we had to come out with the right approach and the right energy. There were some things in the second quarter we weren't sharp enough on. Time to time really to catch your breath, discuss things you need to improve upon or what you've seen out there that can hopefully help each other in the second half. That's what we did.

I thought we came out in the third quarter with the right approach, got some stops, had some good execution.

**Q. After Game 2, Victor said he was going to use the**

**way that game ended to fuel him and you guys. What do you think allowed him to have the bounce back he did?**

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm sure Victor has numerous sources of motivation. I don't think any of us are surprised or expect anything different than a strong performance and him being on his front foot in terms of being in attack mode.

For me and the staff, our job is to help the guys. There's no momentum. There's no carryover. We learn what we saw and experience from the previous game, and now plural. When you get into series, you got to settle in. The clarity that comes from watching the tape, arguing with your staff, trying to help the guys is the job.

That's what we'll continue to do and we'll have the same approach in the next 48 hours.

**Q. De'Aaron had that shot with 12 seconds left, that mid-range jumper. He struggled all night with his shot. Does that reinforce you want the ball in his hands in those situations, clutch situations?**

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, it's been in his hands. There's times where you ride a hot hand, do this or that. De'Aaron has been one of the best closers in this league for the last, I don't know what is, five to seven years, whatever it may be.

He's been a great closer for us. We trust him with the basketball in his hands, just like we do with the other main guys that dominate the ball and they make good decisions.

There's times where they got to be aggressive for themselves and other times where they got to look for their teammates when there's a crowd or their teammate has an advantage. We don't expect anything different.

**Q. What did you think of Steph's performance?**

MITCH JOHNSON: I thought he was aggressive, and I'm expecting him to be aggressive. He made some shots and stepped up and made some free throws. It's what big-time players do.



**Q. You guys defensively had one play in particular coming out of the timeout, just over four minutes left. You scrambled and it ended with Victor blocking Shamet at the rim. What were your thoughts on that play, the effort your guys made?**

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, that was one of the plays tonight I think that was really good reflection and example of we've had some possessions in the series quite a bit, and they've made some plays. Tip the cap to New York. But we've gotten them in late clock.

When we get teams in the late clock, there's a lot of times where you need to take advantage of that. Typically, that means they're not playing as organized basketball offensively. It also means sometimes you're not as organized defensively, but if you have the multiple efforts and then the connectivity of communication, hopefully can give you a good chance to get a stop.

Again, a lot of times on those types of stops, it also bleeds into and transitions to offense.

It was a really good possession in terms of multiple efforts, anticipating what your teammate was going to do. Victor was there to do what he does best, clean it up at the rim. It was a huge stop. We needed it at the time.

**Q. Defensively in the fourth quarter, they weren't able to get their first basket until around eight minutes left. What were your thoughts on how the team started the final period?**

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, again, game plan execution, starting in the right spots, early communication, good switching, good job shifting, understanding when we were rotating, getting to our inverts. Then just working through the possessions.

It's the same thing we've been doing all year. Obviously, this is the Finals. It's against a team that's playing great basketball. But those are the simple things that go into executing the right way over time in a game, in a series. It's just the simple things.

**Q. With Victor, I think his first three or four buckets were at the rim. Is that a renewed emphasis coming into this game?**

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, I think it's every game. Games take on different personalities and different opportunities can show themselves early, right? We never told Victor don't shoot an open three-point shot, even if it's early in the game. We wanted to put pressure on the paint and the rim.

It can show itself in a lot of ways. There are times where he puts pressure on the rim. They tag him with one or two people, something else with someone else, or he may be open late in the possession. We have to stay a little bit more stubborn and disciplined, trying to attack in that way.

**Q. We saw the lineup with the three guards, Dylan, De'Aaron and Stephon, like they played multiple minutes together. How important is that lineup for the team? What does it help you to do?**

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, they've been great. Again, we haven't got to it as much as this year for a lot of circumstances that I don't think anybody cares about right now. Sub patterns help finding minutes and continuity with everybody else.

They're three of our better players. There's some reasonable logic that goes into them playing together.

**Q. Seems like you guys are at your best when you're attacking the rim relentlessly with Victor and the guards. The Knicks, seems like they've made a strong effort with the paint. What has been the cat-and-mouse strategies you have used there?**

MITCH JOHNSON: The NBA Finals, two teams that are well-prepared and well-coached, imposing each other's will on trying to execute and execute their physicality and take away things and take advantage of things.

I don't think there will be a whole lot more new in 48 hours. It will be who can do it better.

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