

NBA Finals: Knicks vs. Spurs

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San Antonio Spurs

De'Aaron Fox

Practice Day

Q. You have been great dealing with adversity the whole postseason. The Knicks talked a lot about being up 2-0, about the 0-0 mentality. What is your mantra or phrase within the locker room to keep up with yourselves?

DE'AARON FOX: Yeah, I mean, we're trying not to look at it as a series. We're looking at it one game at a time. Especially when you go down 2-0, especially while losing those games at home, it could look like it's a real steep, uphill battle.

We're taking it one game at a time. We know our season's going to be over in a week and a half, regardless win or lose. We're taking this one game at a time, looking at it as a one-game series.

Q. You had a big shot at the end of Game 3. What does that do for your confidence leading into Game 4?

DE'AARON FOX: I try not to let making shots waver or boost your confidence. It's a make-or-miss league. We're in Game 103, 104 or something this year. You try not to let that be the reason that you play defense better or you box out better.

You do all these other things that can affect the game because there are days when you're going to come in and shots aren't going to fall. There will be games where you can't miss a shot. You try not to let that be the roller coaster you ride throughout the course of the year.

Q. I think you were 25, 26 when you were in a pretty epic seven-game series in the Playoffs, saw kind of how overwhelming that can be to a young player. Have you been surprised at all by Dylan Harper, Steph Castle, Victor Wembanyama, how unflappable they've been through all of this?

DE'AARON FOX: No, not at all. I mean, you get around those guys, you kind of see their personalities. They just don't have the personalities that you would think that are



just going to be overwhelmed by something.

I don't know what they're feeling on the inside obviously. What you see out there on the court with them, just when you see it on their faces when New York is going on a run, you don't see them panic.

Obviously, there are going to be plays where teams are going on a run, there's a bad turnover here, a bad shot there. That happens with the oldest teams, the best teams that have ever played. You don't see those things come into effect with these guys.

That's a big reason why we're here. There have been times when we've been down 15, 20, up 20, 15, the other team goes on a run, we're able to respond. You don't see that out of young guys like that all the time.

That's why we're so good, because we have the youth, we have the size, we have the athleticism, we have the poise to be able to withstand those things.

Q. Since you played alongside Victor, have you noticed a shift in terms of him wanting to be well-liked to now embracing more of a villain role, kind of showing the league if you play me physically, I'm going to get right back to you?

DE'AARON FOX: Liked by other people?

Q. In the league, perception-wise.

DE'AARON FOX: I mean, I don't think it's a villain role. If you get hit, you hit back. That's life. If life hits you, you need to figure out a way to get on your feet and hit it back.

Every time he rolls, he gets tagged, he gets hit. If he's trying to go set a screen, box out, whatever it may be, he's getting grabbed, he's getting held. It would be crazy for him to think he's going to get open by not hitting somebody.

But that's basketball. It's going to be physical. No one expects anyone to come out here and not have bumps and bruises or injuries or all these things. I don't think it's trying to be a villain.

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You know that team's going to be physical with you, so you go out there and you try to hit first.

Q. You spent some time cross-matched on KAT in the series, sometimes off a switch, sometimes playing him straight. What is job one when you have to deal with that? What do you like about what that matchup gives you guys defensively?

DE'AARON FOX: For me specifically, I think this is with like a majority of the guys I get switched onto, obviously they're going to be bigger than me, you try to get under them. I try not to let bigger guys dribble against me. Obviously the closer they get to the basket, the easier it is for them.

I think despite my size, I feel like I'm pretty physical, especially on the defensive end. Just being able to try to take those hits and stand guys up, if you can force a shot to be 13 feet rather than 10 feet, the numbers drop drastically.

That's the big thing for me, obviously not trying to give a layup, knowing I have help on my side, knowing I have Victor behind me, it allows you to be a little bit more aggressive on the defense end.

Obviously, you want to do it without fouling. At times you'll foul. If you can stand bigger guys up, make those shots a little further out, I feel like that's a win for us defensively.

Q. What do you think is the biggest challenge for you guys to win Game 4?

DE'AARON FOX: I think the biggest challenge for us is the same that it's been this whole series -- keep them out of transition, don't turn over, and get offensive rebounds.

That's when they've gone on their runs. I think we've been in control these three games most of the game. When they hit us, go on those runs, it's how quickly did we respond, stop the bleeding. That's pretty much been the series.

Q. The series against OKC was very physical. Did something translate to the team in terms of the aggressiveness you're playing with, the ability to get to the free throw line, be physical on defense? Did that previous series help?

DE'AARON FOX: Yeah, I mean, I think just all four of our Playoff series this year. I mean, Portland, physical team. Minnesota, physical team. OKC, physical team. New York, physical team. I think all these teams have something in common.

I think on the offensive end is where these teams are really different. Neither of those other three teams shoot the ball like this team does. Neither of those other three teams play as fast as this team does.

Knowing there's something similar that we come out but knowing there's going to be differences in some of the nuances of schematics or personnel. I think those three series did help us prepare for the physicality we were going to see.

But I think defensively we've made it tough on them. Something else that two of those three teams did is they rebounded their misses really well. That's what this team does as well.

We were pretty much prepared for whatever we were going to see. I think that is why these have been good games. Like I said, we have to be able to stop the bleeding as quickly as possible. OKC does it. Those other two teams, they don't get their offensive flow from the defensive end like New York does. When they're doing that, that is when they are at their best, and that's when it really hurts us.

Q. There's been a couple times where a guy gets deep in the paint, has a shot, sees Vic, throws it backwards. Do you ever have a moment on the court, get mad, have to laugh, you gave up a three because teams don't want to mess with that guy?

DE'AARON FOX: That's been happening all season. We pretty much know that's on every team's scouting report. You want to pull Vic away from the basket. Two, when you get to the paint, kick out because Vic is going to be there.

As the course of the season has gone on, we've gotten better at rotating around him. He's also gotten better at rotating if he needs to get to the perimeter.

We know what teams want to do. Teams know how we want to defend them. At this point it's a battle of wills and a battle of who can execute the most.

Q. Last night you seemed more relaxed, enjoying more the game of basketball. What changed in your mind coming to Game 3?

DE'AARON FOX: I mean, I would say just trying to ease yourself into the game. Obviously being on the road, being in an environment like this, you know it can get really hectic. We talk about how poised I feel like our team has been. We've been a pretty good road team all of the Playoffs, a majority of the regular season. That's why we're in this position.



We find a comfort playing on the road, knowing when you're in this environment, it's us versus them, and obviously everybody in the crowd. When you know that, everybody behind you has your back, it allows you to settle into these games.

Q. Do you enjoy more playing on the road than home?

DE'AARON FOX: I wouldn't say I enjoy one more than the other. I do think whenever you're on the road, you have to be the other, because most of the time the thing is role players play better at home. We know when we come here, their role guys will likely play better.

We know these are things that we can't allow it to falter us in the way we play. It can get out of hand pretty quickly if you don't have a sense of togetherness when you're on the road.

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