

NBA Finals: Knicks vs. Spurs

Friday, June 12, 2026

San Antonio Spurs

Mitch Johnson

Practice Day



Q. Throughout this Playoff run you've referred to the hundred games that you have played. In terms of in your internal evaluations after losses, have you found it more advantageous to emphasize how you built the leads or focus on how you lost the leads?

MITCH JOHNSON: It's a good question.

I think every game takes on different personalities. A lot of times when you watch the games back, with the level of detail that I would guess all staffs do, but I can speak for our staff, there's so much that starts to happen, whether on a certain play before you make the shot or before the runs happen.

I think that's what gives someone a lot of clarity on what went well and what didn't, what led to it. A lot of times, again, these things aren't in a vacuum, isolated types of things.

As you see that there's a lot of times themes of the game that may not necessarily show themselves in a box score on the surface level, that when you start peeling back the layers, you start to understand the ripple effect, good and bad, of what you do or what you did.

Q. When you speak of clarity, obviously you had opportunities to win all four. So did the Knicks. It's been that kind of deal. How do you deliver the message when you've gone through four of these, the human condition being what it is? How do you deliver that message that these are X, Y, Z ways that we've been successful, this is what we have to continue doing? Is there a trick to it at this point?

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, no trick. I think, if anything, there's conviction in strength and confidence. That's what it is. There's no trick. There's no avoiding what's happened. There's no avoiding all four games have been winnable games. There's not avoiding we're down 3-1. There's not avoiding ways that we could be better. There's nobody that's going to be harder on ourselves and

accountable to ourselves than the people in the locker room and each other.

That's what helped us get to where we are, and how the group is built. There's no circumstance that will change that.

Q. With Victor getting up to 44 minutes, as you went back and evaluated, did you think fatigue was a factor for him down the stretch? Did you have any second thoughts about your rotation?

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, we've had that discussion throughout the season of his buildup of minutes. He's played heavy minutes at times through the games.

Again, all minutes aren't created equal. Some quarters are slow, reviews, timeouts, a game can get going like that.

Mike may have asked after the game, at the time I didn't feel any need, but looking back on it, I do believe that I have to make sure that I help him have the energy required to finish the game as strong as he needs to finish the game.

Looking back on the game, I think I could have done better in that regard. That's not a number of minutes. That's not meaning he's going to play this many minutes tomorrow. It's looking back on the game, and that game in itself, I got to make sure that I help with that.

I think I could have been better in that regard looking back from that game.

Q. When you did evaluate the last part of that game, over the last couple days, were there mistakes that you drilled down on? Was it a matter of going over, we did X, Y, Z this way, we should have done it this way? Did you focus more on the positives?

MITCH JOHNSON: We did film as we've done. Actually, to be honest, the third quarter had the most disappointing parts in terms of the lead was big, it wasn't quite hurting us enough, wasn't quite not feeling good yet, because now you're up 22, you're up 18. It's hard to win an NBA game by 30 points for this stretch of the game.

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There's natural logic that understands teams make runs. You may not just boat race somebody in an NBA Finals game at their place.

But there was a lot of things that we did, where it felt like we could have put our energy into the right spots in that third quarter. Some things that I could have done to help that, as well.

I think that quarter probably was the most disappointing for me. There's some learning things in every quarter, don't get me wrong, some things we want to be sharper with, better at, finish games. I totally understand the question.

The third quarter for me was the one that stood out, especially after what we said at halftime, just in terms of putting our energy into the right places and the level of execution.

I actually thought we didn't get probably taken advantage of to the level we could have. Because they missed some shots. We weren't as connected and disciplined as we should have.

Q. Is there anything that could have been done differently on OG's tip-in after looking at the film? De'Aaron is getting heat for decisions he made in the game. Is that difficult to know all that he did to help get you guys in this position?

MITCH JOHNSON: I can't speak for everybody else. I don't get into social media. I think I've been fired 212 times and we've traded Fox 72 times. We still have to show up and play tomorrow and I've got to coach.

The people that matter, we bond together, we stick together through the highs and lows. We were I think chosen to be in the Play-In [Tournament]. There's a lot of things that happened. Fox and I were fortunate enough to experience All-Star Weekend together. We got a lot of positive after that. We lost a tough game in the Finals that we had a lot to do with in terms of we had control to walk that thing down.

That's what comes with the job. That's not more or less. People have their opinions. I don't care. I care what the people that matter in our building and in our organization, in that locker room, that they know how I feel. I hear them, how they feel. De'Aaron Fox will have the basketball in his hands at the end of the game tomorrow, and I have the utmost confidence he's going to deliver like he's done countless times for us.

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