

NBA Finals: Knicks vs. Spurs

Saturday, June 13, 2026

San Antonio Spurs

Coach Mitch Johnson

Game 5: Postgame

Knicks 94, Spurs 90

Q. I know it's early, but do you look at this whole experience as just a great building block for what you want to do in the future?

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, it's a little early to go there.

But yeah, I mean, we've been blood, sweat and tears for nine months basically. It's over. So there will be plenty of time for reflection.

But yeah, on the surface level, I don't think anybody other than the people in that room expected us to be here. So there's a lot of good in that. There's a lot of pain in what just happened. Both things can be true.

Q. When you look at the five games in this series, the four losses specifically, common thread is the loss of leads. Was there something that was present in your mind in all four of those contests?

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, there's a lot that goes into it. The simple consistencies, we didn't deserve to win the games. There's a lot of level of execution. There can be rebounding. There can be end-of-game details. There can be starting the game where you get the lead and then you don't sustain that.

NBA games are long, it happens during the regular season, too. Everything is much more on stage during the Finals when everybody's watching.

We weren't ready to win an NBA championship. The better team won. We did a lot of good things, and we didn't finish the job. That's what it is.

Q. What's the first thing that you tell them whenever y'all walk in the locker room after that?

MITCH JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm not going to get into what I told them. The general sentiment is just I want them to feel



all the emotions. I feel that, too. Whatever they feel, that's real. That's what is competitiveness. That's what makes you better. That's what pushes you to continue to improve in the dark, long hours when nobody is around.

We improved a whole lot this year. We still have a lot now. More motivation to continue to get better.

Q. As you guys begin to process these emotions over the next few days, what do you make of the season that Dylan Harper has had? Is it hard to believe he's only 20 years old.

MITCH JOHNSON: I just am really proud of him and Carter, just because they're both rookies. I'm going to take the opportunity.

The way they trusted the program and allowed us to educate them on corporate knowledge, what it meant to be a professional basketball player, and one for the San Antonio Spurs. They did that appropriately.

We saw their talent, they're playing in the NBA Finals, guarding MVPs in Anthony Edwards, et cetera, et cetera. I'm very proud of them.

Q. Jalen Brunson scored 45 points. What do you wish your team had done differently against him?

MITCH JOHNSON: Make him score less points.

Q. On Jalen, what got him going so early? He was the only Knicks player to be able to score in the first half. What got him going, in your opinion?

MITCH JOHNSON: He's aggressive. He got to spots. We were undisciplined at times. They had 37 points at half. There's some good in that, as well.

He got going, then he got going later on. He's a heck of a player. He deserves everything he's got.

Q. There's a lot of Spurs fans that are saddened that have been supporting you throughout the season. What do you want Spurs fans to know this evening?

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MITCH JOHNSON: I'm glad that they're sad. I'm glad that they get mad when we lose or wanted us to be better. That's part of being a fan and the support.

We feel the love and the support from everybody in the 210 and across the world. We have the best fans in the world.

Again, we've been at this for nine months. We wanted to win the series like the other ones, and we didn't. And we'll be just the same people. We're not going to flinch, blink, waver. We'll be here until whenever we get the schedule and figure out our next game, and we'll be better.

Q. What do you hope the players take from the totality of the season that they can fuel them going forward all the way down to listening to the other team celebrate a championship on their home floor?

MITCH JOHNSON: I hope they take the same thing that we've taken from our success. I hope it leads to them be hungrier than they've ever been, and I hope it leads them to be more motivated than they've ever been, and hopefully that leads them to be more -- yeah, just to continue to improve in every facet.

Q. How much did what they were doing defensively bother Steph tonight? Was De'Aaron feeling some of the aftereffects from Game 6?

MITCH JOHNSON: No, again, I don't want to get too big picture.

Teams that have been in this space before typically have a group of people that have played together for some time. A lot of times that shows itself in the slowest part of the game and at the end of the game.

These guys are going through that for the first time this year and then in the Playoffs for the first time, the Conference Finals and the Finals.

They're typically a lot better in year two and year three. We have to get better individually, that's as a coach and as a player, and continue to help them. They have to continue to help themselves. They'll continue to learn about each other and be better.

Q. This is Victor Wembanyama's first Playoff appearance, goes to the Finals. How would you say his leadership style has evolved or changed throughout this process?

MITCH JOHNSON: I think it's grown tremendously. I think he's stepped into every moment with the appropriate amount of fearlessness and also respect for the moment

and being exactly who he is. He's bringing his teammates and everybody else along with him. It's been pretty fun to observe and be a part of.

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