

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

Jamal Murray Kentavious Caldwell-Pope

Denver Nuggets
Game 1: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 132, Los Angeles Lakers 126

Q. Jamal, Coach said you were dealing with something and you weren't able to do much the last couple days. How are you feeling?

JAMAL MURRAY: I mean, manageable. Yeah, I got an ear infection on Saturday. You know how ear infections are; they hurt a lot. Just kind of wait it out. Couldn't really do much, like you said, on Saturday and Sunday.

Q. Kentavious, what did tonight show you about Jamal's toughness and what were your expectations over the last couple days, knowing that he wasn't able to do anything?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: I mean, I'm always telling him we're going to need him. I appreciate all the energy and effort that he's giving us, knowing what he's going through. It shows a lot of toughness. We need that from our leader.

Q. Jamal, the last quarter before you closed the game, what were you thinking? What was the team thinking about on that last run of the Lakers?

JAMAL MURRAY: I mean, just weather the storm, not foul, rebound, not turn the ball over. Those are the things that were going through my mind at the time.

Q. KCP, you played for them in 2020, you won the ring. Before the game did you think you'd have an advantage against them because of that?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: No. I mean, it's a whole new team from the championship team that I was on. But just knowing them guys is an advantage. I played with them for four or five years.



But I love our team here. The toughness that we come out with and we play throughout the game, we're going to need it throughout the series.

Q. It felt like you played off of Joker just about every way you could during the course of the game -- cutting to the rim, when he was on the block spacing for threes. Can you talk about how long it takes to develop a chemistry with a player like that, and what percentage total chemistry do you think you have at this point in the season?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: It don't take that long. I'm a basketball player. I adjust to whatever I need to adjust to, my teammates, whatever they need me to do. Been playing with him for the whole season, so I feel like that's enough to have a chemistry. It didn't take a long time, just playing off him, playing off the ball, playing off Mal. I feel like I fit perfect just playing with these guys.

Q. Kenny, as mentioned you've played with LeBron recently and now you're playing with a great in Joker. You might be the best equipped to tell us how similar these two players are.

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: I feel like the only difference is Bron can jump higher than Jokic. That's about the only difference that I can see. I just love playing with Jokic, willing passer, dominant big man down there. Just seeing him do what he do gets everybody else going, as well.

Q. Jamal, looked like they went under on a couple screens on you. Did that surprise you, and what's your mentality?

JAMAL MURRAY: No, teams mix it up. A lot of teams mix it up. I've seen a lot of different coverages. Yeah, it's whatever.

Q. Coach Malone mentioned that they threw a couple different looks at Nikola and sent the double early, and Nikola beating him with the pass and switched to one-on-one and switched to Rui with AD floating. Is that something you anticipate or do you have to see for a couple possessions to alter what you're doing?



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JAMAL MURRAY: That's why it's a series. Sometimes it's tough to adjust in the game, especially with matchups. We know that. I think we just did a good job of making shots and weathering the storm. That's why it's a series. It's going to go back and forth. Both teams are going to make adjustments.

I want to give a big shout to K, though. How old are you?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: 30.

JAMAL MURRAY: Boy. Yeah, man, boy got a family, and every night, every day in practice, every game he comes out with energy, running corner to corner, guarding their best guy, energy, making shots and he doesn't let up. He's relentless. Tonight he just got us going. For all four quarters he was talking. He's one of the most professional teammates I've had and been able to play with.

Q. Jamal, game was close. Mike comes up with a big turnover that leads to -- securing the ball to the floor that leads to the oop to AG. How big was that?

JAMAL MURRAY: It was big. It was very big. It was a momentum swinger. Got the whole crowd back in it. I don't remember the following play, but it felt like they got a little stagnant after that. Typically when you have a big swing like that, it slows the tempo down for the other team. So I felt like that was a huge play on both ends.

Q. KCP, for you, I asked Coach the same question, but we know LeBron and AD are their own challenge, kind of like what you dealt with the last series with Book and KD. How do you make things harder on their role players so they aren't getting as easy looks certainly down the stretch?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Continue to keep the pressure on them, continue to just give them any look that we can. I feel like the more pressure we put on them, the more we force the other guys to make shots, make the plays, it's better for us.

Q. I know you said you don't feel like you have an advantage going up against the Lakers given they were your former teammates, but do your eyes light up when you see that they beat the Warriors and secure a matchup against you guys? You're like, all right, I get to go up against them again?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: No, my eyes didn't light up. I feel like it's the next series, next team. But it's exciting just to play against them and to be able to go through these guys to get to The Finals. I know it's going to be a competition throughout this whole series, and that's

what I like about the game, competing. We'll see which better team come out.

Q. Kenny, Jamal said you were talking constantly. Inasmuch as you could say, what were you encouraging the guys?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Keep playing hard, don't let up, continue to do what we were doing, defend, rebound, get out in transition and just force everybody to make shots. Don't play the clock or the score, let's just keep playing.

That's what I love about this team, we don't let up no matter what happens. They had a good run in that fourth, but this team, I love it because we don't let up. We just buckle down and get stops when we need them.

Q. Jamal and KCP, you guys have seen a lot of Joker. Have you ever seen him drive that hard, that fast to the rim and dunk twice like that?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: That spin move was tough. That gave me more energy, the spin move to the dunk. It just gave me more energy to keep playing hard. My teammate was ready and willing to do whatever it takes to get this win.

JAMAL MURRAY: Yeah, I've seen him do it a couple times in practice. He has got up, put-back dunks. He can jump higher than you think.

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