

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

LeBron James

Anthony Davis

Los Angeles Lakers

Game 1: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 132, Los Angeles Lakers 126

Q. Talk about the shift you guys had when Rui was in the lineup and you were playing off-ball on Jokic.

ANTHONY DAVIS: Something that we just went to, a little adjustment. Different adjustment just throughout the course of the game. We did end up liking it. Stayed with it for a while. Maybe something we go to in Game 2, once we go back and look at the film.

But just thinking about it right now, something that we liked. Just to also have me roaming and things like that. But like I said, good adjustment but we'll go back and look and see ways that we can be better.

Q. What did you notice about the way Denver hit first? Was the key on the glass with Jokic and how did you adjust over the course of the game?

LEBRON JAMES: Yeah, it took us a half to get into the game and that was pretty much the ballgame right there. We have to understand that we have to start from the tip-off, and they punched us in the mouth to start. I think they had more offensive rebounds than we had total rebounds in the first half, and you know, that led to them getting second-chance points.

They also got them on fast break and killed us in the fast break in the first half and was 10-for-10 from the free throw line. I know the game is won in 48 minutes, but they set the tone in 24 minutes and we were playing catch-up for the next 24.

Q. You've been through so many of these before. How can the team be affected by cutting the margin down to three like you did tonight and going into the next game versus it staying out of reach?

LEBRON JAMES: In postseason it doesn't matter if you



cut it to one or you're down 20, if you lose, you lose. They are 1-0 and we have to come back with desperation going into Game 2. We have to play better, we have to rebound better. I thought we did a good job of not turning the ball over. That's one thing we've been very conscious about in the postseason, but we've been better in transition and tonight we weren't that great in the first half but we cleaned it up in the second half. So, we need to be better in all facets of the game.

Q. What was the key to that fourth quarter stretch where you hit Austin a couple times?

LEBRON JAMES: Just kind of reading the game. It's always a game between the game and just reading the game and making the proper reads.

You know, they started to go to a 3-4-5, switching pick-and-rolls but any time I was involved with AD they started to switch Jokic onto me and try to keep it body on body, because AD was doing a great job of getting to that pocket and doing what he does best with his floaters and things of that nature.

We know we have opportunities and we can go to other things that also can work for us with myself handling the ball, try to get in pick-and-roll, try to get the good matchup, seeing how they are going to play, if they are going to switch or hard show or whatever the case may be and we just try to exploit that and allow AR [Austin Reaves] to get going in the fourth.

Q. You were very complimentary of Jokic before this game. Can you describe how he played, and in particular, what did you say to him when he made that crazy shot right before the half?

ANTHONY DAVIS: I mean, he's a two-time MVP, very skilled, obviously as his numbers show. Made many tough shots. We just have to make it tough for him, switching up matchups and schemes on him. But he's been playing well through the entire season and especially in these playoffs. You tip your hat to him.

And that shot, I just looked at him and just smiled. Nothing else I could have done, 40 feet away from the basket, one dribble, kind of throws it up and it goes in. Definitely one of them nights.



You know, we're encouraged about the second half of the game, and things we can get better at and make some adjustments going into Game 2.

Q. You guys found stuff after the first half but how much of it do you think was the size on the court to start the game? You guys didn't go small and they are a pretty big team and I think at one point they had nine offensive rebounds on the first 11 misses in the game. How much of a factor do you think that was?

LeBRON JAMES: Some of them was effort plays. Some of them was just out of reach. You know, we had a couple opportunities to get early defensive rebounds; we wasn't able to do that. One of them was a block-out by me and Jokic coming down the middle was one of his offensive rebounds.

I think some of them was effort and some of them is about size but for the majority, some of them in the first half, we wasn't just locked in. We wasn't in tune. He had six offensive rebounds in the first quarter; he had six offensive rebounds for the game. So that just lets you know we started to get more in tune with what we need to do and how we need to block out and how we need to hit bodies and things of that nature, and I think we got better as the game went on.

Q. Austin and Rui said they felt there was a lack of energy and effort in the first half. Do you agree with that and how do you explain lack of effort in Game 1 of the Western Conference Finals?

LeBRON JAMES: We'll be better. We'll be better. We know we didn't play up to our capabilities in the first half. I even thought in the third quarter when we were going back and forth making shots, I thought we were still in tune with it. They were just making some, you know, shots with hands in their faces, bodies on bodies.

But you know we'll be better in Game 2, that's for sure.

Q. A lot to be made about Jokic tonight and his performance but what about AD's game?

LeBRON JAMES: AD was phenomenal, 40 and 10, changed shots at the rim. But he's been -- AD has been great all postseason, so we are not worried about that. You know, so we just have to do our job, as well, myself, chipping in, everybody down the ladder from there. It's nothing that surprised us about AD's performance.

We have to do a great job of just backing him up, not only on the offensive end to relieve pressure off of him but also

on the defensive end, as well. When he's changing shots, we have to clean glass, we have to help, we have to make our rotations clean. That allows us to do what we need to do offensively.

Appreciate it.

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