

# NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

## Nikola Jokic

Denver Nuggets

Game 1: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 132, Los Angeles Lakers 126

**Q. Nikola, were you surprised that they opted to start small, and why do you think you had such an advantage inside? You were kind of forcing your way through their defense.**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I don't know. I thought our defense was really good. Our defense was really good. I was just getting there to rebound the ball. I think that's why. They didn't surprise us. We knew they were going to start Vando or start Schroder. It was one or another, so they didn't surprise us.

**Q. Nikola, when you hit that three at the end of the third, AD smiled and you looked like you shrugged at him. What were you thinking at that point?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Sometimes luck is on our side. It's a crazy shot, of course. It's not something that I work on. I'm glad it went in.

**Q. You told us yesterday you don't have a strategy when you think about, should I be more physical or anything like that. You were very aggressive to start the game. What made you see that being aggressive was going to work?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: It's a playoff. We need to be aggressive. We need to win the game. Especially in front of our home crowd, especially because they won two Game 1s. So I think being aggressive, it's normal right now.

**Q. Just a moment ago Jamal said that Kentavious is one of the most professional teammates he's ever had. As you're making this first playoff run with him on your team. Can you talk about what he's brought tonight and the first few weeks as you've been on this postseason run with him?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I think I answered this question 17 times. KCP is a champion, he's a winner, he knows what to do.



He's a professional. He's vocal, he's tough. So he knows what is his role, and he's doing it the best in the world.

**Q. You mentioned how good that defense was early. It kind of disappeared in the second half. What was the biggest difference between what you did in the first half and what you did in the second half?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I think we were -- I don't know. It's not just us, it's them, too. They're a really good team. They have AD, who is playing really, really well. They have LeBron, who is affecting the game in every possible way. Austin Reaves played really well today for them. Rui played really well for them, too. Sometimes the offense beats the defense, I think.

**Q. When they go big and keep Rui in there for a while, how does this change things or make it more difficult?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, we saw it before. We saw it against Minnesota. We saw it even during the season. We were just -- I had a couple turnovers. I had a couple turnovers. I missed a shot. I think it doesn't surprise us. But I think we're going to figure it out because we did the last -- I don't know, whenever they did to us.

**Q. Going up against Anthony Davis in this series, you guys went one-on-one tonight, a lot of possessions in the post. What's the challenge in going against a defender that's so skilled defending one-on-one like that?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Yeah, he's really, really, really, first of all, talented. He's a real threat. He can play in the pocket. He can play iso. He can play on the post. He's really, really talented, probably the most skilled guy if you think about the size and what he can do with the ball and how good of a mid-range shooter he is and how he's attacking the glass. I think probably one of the most talented players in the league.

**Q. There was a play as the lead was getting smaller where Michael gets on the floor and digs out a loose ball and goes the other way for a fast-break dunk. How important is it for Michael in those situations to just give it his all on the defensive end for you guys?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Yes, I mean, he made a big block at the



end -- not at the end, in the fourth quarter. But that was a big, big moment. I was there, and then the ball went off of LeBron's leg, then Mike got it on the floor, got it, then he was fighting with LeBron for the ball, the ball went in the air -- no, KCP took it and he passed to Jamal and Jamal passed to AG. Big, big moment. It was three for us, and it was five for us in that moment. Big, big moment.

I think that's playoff basketball. Those kind of situations matter a lot.

**Q. There was a big battle between you and AD, but in the last quarter there was an adjustment and Hachimura go to you. Were you surprised or what can you tell us about that?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: No, I just answered that question, my friend. Sorry.

**Q. Coach said it was poise, not panic in the fourth quarter. What did you see from your teammates when they were making the big comeback and what impressed you most about your refusal to give in?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, it's a playoff. I think it's a normal situation. Some team gets on a run and sometimes offense beats defense. I think it's normal. But we're going to take a win and take 1-0 for us. Of course.

I think we were getting looks. We got KCP on the 45 -- the corner three. I missed a mid-range whatever it is, fadeaway something. Jamal missed was it a mid-range, then AG got a big offensive rebound and had two free throws. I think those situations and moments you cannot think about it, what you're going to do. You just play. You just try to win a game and try to defend the possession or try to score in the possession.

**Q. We know Jamal has been out the last couple days battling something, comes up with 31 points. What impressed you most about his night?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, he was playing really well. The whole Playoffs I think he's playing amazing. We all know what he brings, the toughness. Of course maybe he's just faking it; he didn't want to practice, just to get a couple days off.

**Q. KCP said the only difference between you and LeBron is that he can jump higher than you. Do you feel like your games are similar?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: That's really offensive. (Laughter).

I'm joking. To be compared with one of the best ever or

the best ever, I think it's really cool. I don't know. I think we don't have a similar game. Maybe we have like a similar global game, if that makes any sense. We affect the game in different ways. But he's a really good player.

**Q. Nikola, how important is it for you guys to play fast in this series?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, we need to defend first so we can play fast. That's the goal, especially because we know how they are good in transition. That's a big part of their game, transition and fast-break points. Whenever we have offensive rebounds and we can go, that's the best points we can get.

**Q. I just got to ask, what did you think of Michael Porter's suit tonight?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: It was good. It was good. He's picking it up.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.