

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Thursday, May 18, 2023

Darvin Ham

Los Angeles Lakers

Game 2: Pregame

Q. Do you want to get it out of the way and tell us the starting lineup now instead of waiting for 30 minutes prior?

DARVIN HAM: I just said the hell with it, coming in here, I knew that would be the question. Just decided, why not, just let you know that you'll find out in about an hour (laughter).

Q. We talked yesterday about possible adjustments and such, and since you're not going to get into the lineup, how about the way that Denver started the last game, what was the biggest thing that you saw and how much do you anticipate they will be able to replicate that energy? Where are the parts of the court where you have to show you can't let that happen again?

DARVIN HAM: Just our normal, general principles. Before you get into adjustments and coverages and matchups, you've first got to bring that fierce, competitive spirit to the table and that allows everything else to work, the energy, the effort, the urgency. It not the other way around.

They were able to get some easy run-outs. Offensively I felt like we didn't move the ball. Got caught no-pass shot, one-pass shot. Had a couple unfortunate turnovers early. They were able to run out and then when they didn't get layups and dunks and whatnot, open threes, they were able to get second, third, fourth opportunities on the glass.

Just the physical hustle game is what I like it call it. You know, when you're talking about transition points, second-chance points, free throws, you know, those to me, are just you being ready to play and coming out, and not saying that we weren't ready to play but coming out with the mindset of not being so tactical in your thinking, knowing that, you know, we have certain ways that we want to guard things, but first and foremost, we've got to bring the juice to the table to be able to compete and get intangibles done.



Q. In your playing days playing against Shaq in the Finals, the strategy was let's let Shaq get his and shut everybody else's water. In this series can you put that same strategy on Jokic to maybe cut off the passing and take your chances with him as a one-on-one player?

DARVIN HAM: Yeah, we've got AD, but if you can call up Ben Wallace and Rasheed Wallace, Elden Campbell, tell them I've got a one-day or a series-long contract for them. That team, we had guys -- no one could stop Shaq one-on-one but we had some really formidable bodies that we could run at him. As I mentioned, Ben, Sheed, Elden, hell, sometimes myself and Corliss [Williamson].

But at the end of the day, I think you're going to see a bit of everything. It's not just rumble, tumble. He's not a rumble, tumble player like Shaq was. He's skilled. A lot of his damage is being done 25 feet away. He's able to put it on the floor, a lot of it's from face-up. So you have to guard him in multiple fashions.

So, we have a bunch of stuff up our sleeve, and as the games wear on, we read it, and we'll be able to make in-game adjustments, whether it's switching up a matchup or switching up a coverage.

Q. The last couple days, there's been a lot of talk on the Denver side about D'Angelo and his defense and trying to target him. What's the key to him holding up on the defensive end and not allowing them to kind of play him off the floor?

DARVIN HAM: Just doing his work early, and that was the biggest thing I told them. Just do your work early and be aggressive and be assertive on the other side of the ball. A lot of times it's human nature, a guy that's offensively skilled as he is, you don't see some shots go in early, get a little frustrated but he's with us. We've had a plethora of different lineups and different guys finish games for us, and we have all the faith in the world in DLo. So, I expect him to come out and play big tonight.

Q. Knowing that you have not been in this exact situation before as a head coach, down 1-0, curious, is there anything --

DARVIN HAM: I've been down 2-10, 0-5.



Q. That's true. That's true.

DARVIN HAM: Environment is a little different, but circumstances.

Q. I remember 2-10, certainly. Even then was there a piece of advice or something that you took from the path that you wove through this thing playing for so many accomplished coaches, working with so many and having the network that you had, is there one thing that you hung on to when your back was, I guess, a little bit against the wall and that you drew upon in these last couple days?

DARVIN HAM: Yeah, you're never as good as they say you are and you're never as bad as they say you are. You've just got to treat each day like it's own entity, each day, each game an opportunity to go out and get better. Never get too high and never get too low.

We go back and do our work, and we are a staff, a team, that really -- the thing that gives me confidence and gives my coaches and everyone in the organization is our work and our preparation. As long as you put the work in, you're prepared, you make sure the players are in a good, physical space to go out and execute what you need them to execute from a physical standpoint. But mentally, knowing that we have initial options, counter options, escape options, all that is in place. You're not going out there feeling naked, so to speak.

It gives you confidence, but the overall big picture is it's basketball, man. It's a process that you have to figure out, and again, it's the best-of-seven and the first to four. So each game, we'll attack as such, and we've seen it time and time again throughout the history of the playoffs, and especially for us this year, each game being a little bit different: Games we've come up short, games where we have been blown out, we blew someone else out, closed a game, a tight, close, hard-fought game; we've come out on top of those and we've lost some of those.

It's a little bit of everything. You just have to go into it with clarity and again be stable because I don't want my team to see me as the head coach all over the place. So again, we keep it simple and we stick to our work and we do our work and go out and try to put our best foot forward.

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