

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Thursday, May 18, 2023

Jamal Murray

Denver Nuggets

Game 2: Postgame

Nuggets 108, Lakers 103

Q. Jamal, going into the fourth quarter you were 5 of 17. What is the mindset you need to have to erupt for a 20-point quarter after struggling throughout the first three?

JAMAL MURRAY: For those who have seen me play before, after a shooting half like that, I normally like to reset, come back down, reset my mind, quick little meditation in my head and just come back out focused. I missed my first couple coming out and had some really good looks. The game would've been a lot easier if I made them the first half. Just come out focused and knock them down, don't lose any confidence or anything like that. Just play my game and know they're going to fall if I keep shooting them.

Q. Can you describe the zone you were in in the fourth quarter? 23, four three-pointers and then those two threes, AD and LeBron?

JAMAL MURRAY: Yeah, once you see a couple go in, it can get it rolling. I was able to just find a little separation and just rise up over the top and make some shots. I thought Mike played great making shots. Bruce. I think everybody. It wasn't really an offensive game most of the game, but on defense everybody stepped up and made big plays. Jeff came in with a big charge. I can go down the line. But everybody had a moment in the game defensively.

Q. We've had teammates say that you've come back from the injury a more complete player, a better playmaker. Tonight I think you flashed a little bit on the defensive end. Can you take me through the last steal. Looked like a lob pass throwing up and you swatted it out, and ended up MPJ's three that put you up 12?

JAMAL MURRAY: Talking about the weak side, right? Yeah, I just saw LeBron trying to move him up the lane,



and I knew that I could get there if I went for it. If I didn't -- trying to find another word for "half-ass it." I just had to go for it and jump for it. If I get a hand on the ball, my teammate would be able to grab it. I just hit it out of the air and was able to go down the other way.

Q. The series looks and feels exhausting just watching it, and in that fourth quarter, you had two steals, you're pushing the pace up the floor, you're dealing with this illness. What does it take to find that energy in a moment like that?

JAMAL MURRAY: And we are in Denver; air is thin out here. But you just grit and grind. You don't want to lose a game. You try to leave it all out there. You don't want to regret it. I could've just ran a little harder to the corner and give somebody an open shot. I could have jumped for the ball and get that steal. I could've, like I said, jumped for the ball and getting a steal.

Just mentally making that switch and committing to it, and it will pay off if you put out the hard work. I think we all -- Joker is exhausted, too. We all were tired, but we gutted it out. We know they're tired, as well. We play in Denver a lot, and they don't as much. So we know down the stretch even if we're tired, they'll be just as tired or even more.

Q. Coach said he thinks you only need to see one go in before you can get going, and after you made that mid-range jumper, you kind of looked to the heavens, like thank goodness. Then he said it looks like you're shooting into a hula hoop at that point. What does it feel like for you? Is that an accurate assessment?

JAMAL MURRAY: Yeah, it just becomes a practice shot, whatever shot you take. I practice all the shots that you see me make and take. You could be shooting in a spot in practice and you miss four or five, six in a row, and then all of a sudden you just lock in and you take a step back, you reset, you refocus and you go back and make 10 in a row like it's nothing.

It's just about resetting your mind. It's all mental, in my opinion. I was able to do that again tonight.

Q. After Game 1, everyone was talking about how the Lakers made that great run, had all the momentum coming in, and everyone was talking about the Lakers



as if they were the ones that won Game 1. As players, hearing that and seeing how people are still learning about you guys as a team, how much did that motivate you guys or how much extra motivation did it give you?

JAMAL MURRAY: You try not to look into it. People are going to talk. People are going to have their assumptions, and what they should do and the adjustments they should make. If they see something working, they're going to adjust and we're going to adjust, as well. In the series, we are going to go back and forth. We are going to make adjustments the next game. We are going to watch film and change stuff up. They're going to do the same.

Game to game it's different. I remember playing Phoenix and Coach said in the locker room, one game was one-something and the next was 97-87. So every game is going to be a little different. You just have to commit to it. If it's a defensive game, then you have to lock down and play defense, make timely shots.

Yeah, the outside noise is the outside noise. We're the Denver Nuggets; we're used to that. Even when we win, they talk about the other team. We beat the Clippers in the bubble, they talk about the other team. Same old, same old. It fuels us a little more and will be sweeter when we win the chip.

Q. You've talked about the Playoffs being the time where the guys step up. You have four fourth quarters of 20-plus points in the Playoffs. That's the most since 1997. Second place is Michael Jordan now and Iverson with two. What is it about the fourth quarter that you love?

JAMAL MURRAY: When I was little, I used to count down the seconds off the shot clock and make the shot and talk like Marv Albert and talk like Mike Breen, just the imagination running as a kid. When you get in that moment and you see your fam in the crowd, see your little brother, see Mike Breen there, all these little reminders, they all pay dividends. And make that moment a little more special, and just kind of lock you back in. You don't want to miss that opportunity, and sometimes reflecting on those moments and remembering how fun it was to do that and be able to not miss the stage.

Playing in the Western Conference Finals against the Lakers and LeBron James. It's an amazing opportunity, and it's something you're going to look back in history and remember for the rest of your life. I just tried to make of it and it's fun when you've got it going like that in the fourth.

Q. When you hit that three over LeBron and they call

that timeout, you wave your hands. What are you thinking? I saw you look into the crowd and you hear the crowd roaring, what was going through your head?

JAMAL MURRAY: Just like, I got it. Like, I found the rhythm I needed to find. I think when I hit the three on the right wing, that was a good shot. And then the three on AD was the one where I was like, okay, I found the mark. I found the target. Just kept finding it.

Q. You've alluded before about meditation. When you meditate and reset and lock in, what is going through your mind at halftime when you're just trying to decompress?

JAMAL MURRAY: It depends on what's happening. Sometimes I need to settle the hell down and sometimes I need to rile myself up. It just depends on what's needed in the game. Tonight I just had to just reset completely. The first half, the second-half three that I had, the open one, the wide-open one, I alligator-armed it. It shows me that I'm overthinking it, and there's no reason for me to overthink an open shot. Once I missed that one and I came up short in the mid-range, I've got to settle down even more. I'm overthinking about the shot too much.

It's all mental practice. I've been having bad halves and crazy second halves the rest of my life. I know how to change it, I know what to adjust. I want to put together a good four quarters.

Q. I think it was Game 1 of the Minnesota series you hit a three, I think you turned to the crowd and said something like, "We're ready for this. We've been waiting for this." Tonight was this an example of being ready for the moment, especially with how the first half went and kind of the determination and mental toughness that you needed to battle back? Was this an example of you guys being ready for the moment here in the Playoffs?

JAMAL MURRAY: Yeah, I think even when we're struggling, we don't lose belief in what we can do. We play like the No. 1 seed and we believe we are the No. 1 seed and we back it up. Even when we're struggling, we're a resilient team. We know how to adjust and reset and focus. We get a couple of stops. K hit a big three and they called timeout.

So yeah, just sometimes it's just a couple possessions that change the whole game and it's just an energy thing. I thought we had a lot of belief in our ability to rally tonight and get the W.

Q. I feel like when you have a great performance

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

people always recall you in the bubble, but you're only 26, you are still writing your story. Do you think the past performance gives you energy and you recall it as much?

JAMAL MURRAY: Yeah, the bubble is what, 2020, and it's 2023? I'm coming off injury and I'm playing decent. I think the years speak for itself, coming off injury and be able to come back to the level at least and play this way. I think I don't really need to comment on it as much anymore.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.