

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Thursday, May 18, 2023

Michael Porter Jr.

Denver Nuggets

Game 2: Postgame

Nuggets 108, Lakers 103

Q. Jamal had struggled the prior three quarters, only just 5-of-17 leading into the fourth quarter. What did you see from him and how locked in was he?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: Yeah, he's had a few games like that this year where he struggles in the first half and then just goes crazy in the second half. I think that just takes a maturity as a player. And I feel like all the best players in the league do that, because it only takes a couple shots going in to get a rhythm. He knows we need him to make shots down the stretch to win games. So I was proud of him for sticking with it.

Q. Mike, after turning down a three and driving it, it looked like your teammates were telling you to just shoot the ball. Then you hit that three in the corner, that big shot. When your teammates say that stuff to you, do you register it? Are you interested in that feedback?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: Yeah, I'm definitely interested in it. They want me to shoot it, I'll shoot it. I felt like they closed out pretty well and it was going to be a contested shot, but at the end of the day, I can shoot over most people. So when they tell me just catch and shoot it, that definitely gave me confidence to just shoot some of those shots down the stretch.

Q. I think you were at just 19 minutes played entering the fourth. When you come back in to start the quarter, what's kind of your mentality? What are you thinking heading into the fourth when you've got a lot in the tank there?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: Yeah, I think same thing that most of our team has, is just a resilience. It might not go our way the first half or certain quarters, but we're all going to be needed down the stretch. One person can't beat this team. They're too good. I just had to refocus and hit a couple big ones down the stretch.



Q. When you know that the game is going to be more of a defensive-minded game versus an offensive-minded game like it was in Game 1, how does that change your approach at all going from game to game in a series like this?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: Yeah, we talked about it before the game. I think the first game against Phoenix it was a high-scoring game, and then the second game I think was like 97-87, something like that. We talked about that before the game. We knew game to game in the Playoffs, it can be completely different. We knew that, and then you've just got to adjust to the feel of the game and how it's going.

Q. Because of the NBA bubble, this core hasn't been on the road in the Conference Finals, so what do you kind of expect out of that atmosphere? What's going to be the message?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: Yeah, I think it's definitely going to be hostile there. They still feel like they're in this series, obviously. It's the first to four; it's not the first to two. They're not going to just roll over, and now they're back in LA, so they're looking to get two wins back home.

We're going to look back on that Phoenix series, when they tied it up in Phoenix. We're going to try to not let that happen in L.A. But it's going to take a lot of focus, and our defense is going to have to carry over into L.A., for sure.

Q. Are you surprised some people around the country claim they're just discovering the Nuggets for the first time, including Jokic and all you guys?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: I mean, I think that's probably how it is with most small-market teams. And in this stage it's just so different. This is a huge stage. A lot of people are probably watching these games that don't normally watch the NBA.

We don't really let that get to us. We've got a lot of dudes who aren't really big into the social media thing or feeding into that, which I think that plays to our advantage being the type of small-market team that we are. I don't think we mind that at all.



Q. Would you like to say anything to people who are just figuring out who you are?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: No, no, I don't really care.

Q. We always talk about the way Nikola is offensively, but tonight I know it takes all five to defend a guy like Anthony Davis, but to hold him to 4-of-15 from the field, what can you say about Joker's defensive impact?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: Yeah, he got the defensive player of the game chain, and he deserved it. AD is one of the hardest dudes to stop, and Jok was playing him one-on-one a lot of the game. It was a huge effort from him. If AD had a game like he had last game, we wouldn't have won that game. So Nikola definitely stepped up on that end.

Q. That defensive possession with AD at the end, were you able to strip that, or could you take me through that possession?

MICHAEL PORTER JR.: Yeah, he kind of had it on a fast break and had me in a one-on-one situation on a break. So I just had to wall up and not let him get anything easy but also not foul him. I think he tried to pass it out or something. I don't think I stripped it. He might have just lost it, but that definitely was a big play for us.

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