

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

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Darvin Ham

Los Angeles Lakers

Game 3: Pregame

Q. We spent so much time thinking about lineups and different guys playing together. How much have you seen that matter in the groups playing together the first two games and how much is it just about the overall fit and the style of playing against Denver?

DARVIN HAM: I just think it's all about us coming with a sense of urgency. Just diving through the film of the first two games, really, privately with the staff, with the team, looking at ways we can get better, the two things that jumped out at me: transition defense, their offensive rebounding. I felt like we did a better job on the glass in Game 2, but we really have to hone in on our transition defense.

It's huge, man. It's the first line of defense. It's the first thing we talk about and teach when we put in our defensive system. And so we have to be great. Just can't be okay. We have to be great in transition.

But we also saw a lot of good things: Going from giving up 132 overall to 108, definitely improved from Game 1 to Game 2. We've just got to stay trending in that direction.

Q. And just to follow up on the transition defense, we talked about the rules that you have for players, like if you're below the break, you can crash. Does that have to be adjusted, given Denver's defensive rebounding and Jokic --

DARVIN HAM: It's everything. It's prioritizing getting back. We definitely want to have a presence on our offensive glass as well, but we've either got to be doing that decisively or getting back. It can't be no-man's land. I felt like in the first two games, we had a lot of guys in no-man's land.

Q. How do you view lineup data in a series? Because a guy like D-Lo, you guys have been outscored by 41 points with him on the floor, 142 defensive rating, but only two games. The series is a small sample size. How do you view not overreacting necessarily but also



looking at something might not be working and you might have to adjust down 0-2?

DARVIN HAM: If it comes to that, it comes to that. But at the end of the day D-Lo is one of our biggest weapons. We are not sitting here in this position, even though we are down 0-2 in the Conference Finals thus far, we are not in this position without him. The numbers are one thing. Numbers are real. You have to pay attention to them, but at the end of the day, I just need D-Lo to go out there and play aggressive basketball.

Q. Over the course of your career, have you noticed that role players seem to play better at home in the playoffs, and why is that the case?

DARVIN HAM: I just think it's a trend, definitely. I just think the home crowd, whether it's limited touches or limited minutes, it's tough on the road because everybody is praying and screaming for your downfall.

But when you're home, you tend to be more uplifted by your home crowd. Obviously, you're home. You're in your own environment. You have your routine. You're sleeping in your own bed. There's a lot of factors that go into that.

I just think the support that you get from your home crowd, again, whether you're one of the guys that gets limited minutes or limited touches, your home crowd appreciates everything you do. It's not just shooting the ball and scoring. It could be diving on the floor or setting a good screen or sprinting back and making a hustle play. Even if the ball goes out of bounds and the team that you're playing against retains possession, just your effort, they tend to appreciate your effort way more at home.

So those guys, those rotational guys, they feel empowered by that. Q. LeBron is 0-for-10 from three in this series. When you've looked back, have they looked like legs, looked like shots that have not gone in? And what have you thought generally of his shot selection when it comes to three-pointers?

DARVIN HAM: It looked like the all-time leading scorer in NBA history taking a shot that was being given to him. The numbers say what they say, but I know he's capable of making those shots. So I don't want him to be any less aggressive.



The biggest thing we talked about was just really living in the paint. But at the end of the day, Bron has the freedom. I want my guys to play free. It's not because of the facts I just stated, but just I want all of our guys to play free. We just have to know that that ball has to be in the paint before we take those type of shots. We just can't come down and settle. It's not a matter of whether or not he can make a three. It's, is that the shot we want to take and let them off the hook if the ball has not been swung or the ball has not touched the paint? That's the biggest thing. We thrive in the paint.

We play a physical style of basketball. We play downhill. We live at the free-throw line and we want to continue those trends and force the defense to have to guard us. But at the end of the day, he's taking those shots and he's very capable and I'm fine with it. It's, again, not whether or not he can make them. It's do we want to allow the defense to have a possession off by us not challenging them to stay front of us, to protect their paint, to guard the rim, and those shots have become ten times easier when the ball has been moved around, been in the paint, sprayed out. They are usually more open shots in that regard.

Q. On that note, how has LeBron been holding up physically compared to the first two rounds of the playoffs?

DARVIN HAM: He's good. He's good to go. He was here early as usual. Talked to him. Great spirits. Feeling alive and ready to go out here and have a hell of a game.

Q. The Nuggets have been pretty vocal about their lack of visibility. You know a lot of people are saying this is the first time they have ever watched Jokic play. You guys seemingly have the opposite problem with LeBron; you have all guys on you at all moments. What's it like living on the other side of the spectrum?

DARVIN HAM: It is what it is. Again, we stand on our work. Whether or not people talk about us, we can care less. We focus on our work we have front of us. I've coached here with this organization with Kobe, coached in Milwaukee with Giannis and now being here with Bron. The work has to be done still. All the outlier crap, whatever, they are not talking enough about us, this, this, that, a third. Hey, all due respect, you want to make note of that, make mention of that, you do what you do.

Us over here in our organization, we are standing on work and we have a lot of work to put in.

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