

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Saturday, May 20, 2023

Darvin Ham

Los Angeles Lakers

Game 3: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 119, Los Angeles Lakers 108

Q. Can you just speak to the start Jamal got off to and how that put you guys behind for the rest of the game.

DARVIN HAM: He got off scorching. I felt like we were doing a pretty decent job on everyone else. He's one of those players, man, once he starts to see them go in, it's just he catches fire, and he rolls them off pretty quickly, which he did in that first half. Basically carried them offensively through that half.

We did a little better job third quarter, I felt like, but you know, this is a tough ballclub. You know, shout out to them. Again, they have been at the top of the food chain for a reason and have a plethora of guys that can hurt you, as was on full display tonight.

But you know, circumstances are what they are. Difficult but not impossible. We just need to come out, you know, start the recovery process now and get ready to get a game on Monday.

Q. You guys have spent, basically, 80-plus games trying to come back. Like that's been the story of this team all season. Are you seeing enough energy from this group to still do it? Are you seeing the receipts maybe a little bit from the push your team has had to put into all of this to get to this point?

DARVIN HAM: It's difficult because a lot of it, you know, against the really, really good teams, and we are a really, really good team. And I've seen how our defense has put people in awkward positions, and it caused them to self-destruct at times, whether it was finishing up the regular season or in these playoffs.

And you know, the defenses, once you get to this point, Conference Finals, Finals, the defense gets dialed up that much more. So you can't have self-inflicted wounds, whether it's turnovers, whether it's giving up offensive rebounds, silly fouls that helps them get to the bonus



quicker. I just think those things, you've got to be extremely, extremely disciplined.

And then, you know, you've got to have some things fall your way as well. We had a bunch of shots that rimmed out. It's just unfortunate.

But again, nobody is going to feel sorry for you. You have to pick yourself back up, fill our cups back up and come back and get one on Monday.

Q. It seemed at times the team took advantage of those non-Jokic minutes with Austin and AD. Was this because of that first-quarter slump and Jamal's hot first half that made it hard to come back from?

DARVIN HAM: Yeah, he got going and I thought we were able to come back and take a lead. Man, give them credit, man, they had some guys step up and make some big shots, Bruce Brown, Jeff, Michael Porter, Jr. They had some guys that stepped up and played well in the absence of Jokic. Once he came back, he just did what he does.

So I mean, our biggest thing is, again, us continuously applying pressure, playing downhill, playing in the paint, making the simple play, and sometimes it worked out sometimes, and other times we had some unfortunate circumstances with turnovers or point-blank miss or give them a second-chance opportunity. We've just got to be more solid.

Q. Pregame I asked you about DLo, what did you make about his performance?

DARVIN HAM: All good looks. All good looks. He just has to remain aggressive. All good looks.

Q. What worked defensively in the second half against Jamal Murray that might not have worked in the first half?

DARVIN HAM: We just decided to put a body on him and keep a body on him. He was getting loose. We had some miscommunication plays where one person may have thought we were switching, and another person thought we were staying home. Without me looking at the game yet, just felt like he took advantage of some of our defensive breakdowns.



He scores in a variety of ways. He's not like a guy that's going to run 50,000 pick-and-rolls, and so you can switch up that coverage and be okay, kind of slow him down. It's pick-and-roll, it's off-balls, it's back doors, it's everything, finding him in transition.

But us, the adjustment was both Dennis and Vando, I thought tried their best to slow him down and disrupt him a little bit, and in the second half, I thought we were able to do that. You know, 30 in the first half, 7 in the second half. But again, just trying to mix up the pitches but keep a body on him.

Again, Dennis and Vando, they tried, but he's a hell of a player, and once he gets rolling, it doesn't matter who is in front of him.

Q. You guys take the lead in the fourth quarter, and I don't want to be disrespectful, they hit the two good threes, but they went on an 11-0 run. Was that defense, turnovers? What did you see in that short little window?

DARVIN HAM: I mean, I thought it was a little bit of everything. Again, I have to go back and look at the tape to be 100 percent sure. But got a couple turnovers, offensive rebounds by them, a couple missed shots by us point-blank, a couple open misses from three. It's a snowball, snowball effect.

Q. Can I ask you about the play of role players? How do you think Rui, Austin, Jarred, DS, D'Angelo, how do you think they equated themselves out there tonight?

DARVIN HAM: I thought they did the best they could, all of them. They competed. I'm disappointed but I'm not upset, you know what I mean in terms of, yeah, it sucks to lose, but those guys, they fought their hearts out. They tried to do it. They tried to execute what we gave them. For some of them, shots went down. For some of them, it didn't. That's just the way it goes, man. It's their fight. Nobody was out there just going through the motions. Everyone I felt like everyone was competing and trying to get stuff done when they were on the floor.

Q. With Denver's shot-making, they hit 14 threes, and even when Jokic was sitting, they got the five threes in that stretch. What do you look at scheme-wise versus just size or what they are doing or is there anything that can be adjusted going into Game 4?

DARVIN HAM: Yeah, we'll go back and look at the tape and see where we go from there. As long as we remain competitive and ready to give multiple efforts in a general

sense, I think we give ourselves a chance to be successful.

But in terms of the particulars and coverages and adjustments, we'll go back and look at the tape, and then that will reveal to us what we need to do.

Q. I remember you recently wrote "0.3" on a whiteboard, signifying the chances that you were given to make the playoffs after a 2-10 start. Obviously the chances of recovering from a 3-0 hole are even tougher. Is there still that hope, though, considering everything that you guys have overcome already this season?

DARVIN HAM: Absolutely. I mean, I think the deficit is 3-0, not 4. So as long as they have not gotten to four yet, there's still hope. We're still alive. We just have to focus on winning one game.

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