

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Saturday, May 20, 2023

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope

Denver Nuggets

Game 3: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 119, Los Angeles Lakers 108.

Q. Can you talk about how important it was for your team to come out of the gate really quickly?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: It was important. We talked about it the day before, how we wanted to come out and be aggressive. We came out and did that perfectly in that first quarter. We let go of the rope a little bit, but we sustained it and got it back.

Q. Describe the businesslike mentality that you came into this trip with and how you executed it.

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Yeah, we talked about it after Game 2 in Denver, how we wanted to come here and make this a business trip as far as like trying to come in here and get two games and not just one.

We came out very professionally and got it done. Continuing to thrive with this team. I love this team and how we continue to fight for what we want.

Q. You know very well how difficult it is to beat the Lakers in this building. What impressed you the most about the business you went about tonight as a team?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: We came out aggressive, with the mindset this is a business trip. We wanted to come in and apply the pressure and not let them apply the pressure to us first. We wanted to throw the first punch, and we came out strong in the first quarter. We did exactly what we wanted to do.

Q. Kentavious, Nikola picks up his fourth foul with seven minutes left in the third quarter. Jamal didn't really have it going in the third. How would you describe that stretch?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Continued to move the



ball, help each other on defense and hit the open guy that's open throughout that stretch. Like you said, Nikola got his third foul, Mal didn't have it going a little bit, but we have other guys, including myself, that can make a play, make a shot down the stretch when we need it.

Q. When LeBron and AD had the ball you guys were showing a lot of bodies, crowding the paint. How did you walk that line between clogging things up and still getting out to their shooters?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Just effort. We wanted to have just the effort on defense, knowing we've got to shrink the floor when them guys have the ball and also make a second effort to get a contest when they do kick it out to their teammates.

We did a great job of that, just helping and also helping the helper. That's a big key for us.

Q. You've been a quiet player going back to your rookie year, but it seemed like tonight you were playing with a bit of a verbal edge. There was a mix-up on a Reeves three, and it seemed like you were a bit more aggressive, chirpy tonight. Is that how you wanted to approach it or did you just find yourself there?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: I feel like I've been verbal the whole season, even more in the Playoffs, just trying to keep my guys motivated for the goal that we have set in training camp. We can't have the mistakes. We're too close to our goal, so we can't have the mistakes when we know the game plan is Reeves is a chase. And then when we have small ball like that with AG at the 5, he's always in coverage, so we've got to know when we check in, just be ready and how to handle mistakes.

Q. Part of the third quarter run, I know, was some buckets for you, especially when Joker goes out you had a couple points. You've had a lot of those times during this playoff run. How do you know when the right time is to sort of assert yourself, when most of the time you're a fourth or fifth guy in the offense?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Just being patient, and when the ball comes to me, taking my open shots and being able to knock them down. Just being confident



within the offense and what we're running.

Q. KCP, do you feel like tonight is another example that shows that you guys can win no matter what the situation is? Like Joker struggles in the first three quarters and you guys still find a way to pull it out?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Yeah, I learn a lot about this team every time we play. We have that resilience, that dog mentality, where no matter if we're up, down, we're going to continue to fight and play our game. We do it at a high level, and we've got to continue to do that throughout the rest of these games.

Q. Do you remember if there was a point when you looked at this team and thought, this is a team that can win a championship?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: From training camp, since we've been playing together and just throughout the whole season. We're No. 1 in the West for a reason. I believed it from the jump that we could win a championship. That was everybody's mindset. We knew how we could jell together and play together. We just wanted to continue to just play hard, together and just continue to just do great.

We're the underdogs. We don't get enough credit for what we do. Like I said, we're No. 1 in the West for a reason. Not being talked about a lot, we take that personal. We just use that energy, continue to prove everybody wrong.

Q. Given that there's not a lot of experience on your squad of guys who have gotten to The Finals, what can you impart on your teammates to get the job done at some point in this series and get to The Finals?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Always telling my teammates, defense is going to win games for us, and it's going to win us a championship. The more we can continue to defend, get stops when we need them or get multiple stops, we're going to be great. I feel like my teammates and I, we're doing a great job at getting stops when we need them, especially down the stretch and closing out games.

Q. Kentavious, we've talked a lot about the businesslike mentality. This really might have been -- there's been a ton of great wins in this playoff run for you guys, but this might have been one of your best coming into this building and getting a win. Do you feel like that mentality is increasing for you guys each round?

KENTAVIOUS CALDWELL-POPE: Yeah, I feel like it's

increasing. We know last round we went into Phoenix, and we gave up two games. We wanted to change that narrative. We went up 2-0, so we wanted to come on the road and make this really a businesslike trip. We're coming to get both games. We got the one tonight, and just Monday we've got to continue to just do what we did here and try to come out with a second win.

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