

# NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Saturday, May 20, 2023

## Nikola Jokic

Denver Nuggets

Game 3: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 119, Los Angeles Lakers 108

**Q. What does it say about your team that you didn't necessarily need to win this game but you come in -- you needed to win tonight?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, it's a playoff. It's a must-win. Every game it's a must-win, I think. I mean, we came here with I think the good focus, good mindset. We played the game really good. The whole focus was really, really -- we had a couple kind of misunderstanding and miscommunication, but I think in global, it was good. They scored 108 points; I think that's a really good number. In that second quarter they had 30-something, but I think in global it's a really good game for us.

**Q. Maybe help us out with some descriptors for Jamal Murray when he's cooking like he was in the first half. What was your vantage point?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Just get him open. Just get him the ball and get him open. See, I think it's so cool to see when he -- everybody is like just get him the ball, screen for him, do something, just make them make some kind of little mistake so he can go and work.

**Q. Michael Malone said that you were coaching them up in the fourth quarter. He gave you credit for saying, let's go to the two-man game. What is Coach Jokic like?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I don't know. I don't want to be a coach. I think that's the worst job on the planet, for sure. (Laughter.)

**Q. After all you've done the last couple postseasons playing without Jamal and Mike Porter Jr., what did it feel like for you tonight when you're in foul trouble the first three quarters but you're not hitting shots you normally make, and to see this team pull it out and win?**



NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, I never doubted my team. I know they're capable. You see it in the third quarter. KCP had a huge segment, like four minutes. He had a big box-out on AD, he had a steal, he had a big three -- two big threes or one big three.

We have some really good players that can step up in the right moment, and that's why we did.

**Q. It was just mentioned by your standards you weren't in a rhythm the first few quarters in foul trouble. What got you going in the fourth quarter offensively?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I was not in a rhythm? Jamal was getting -- I was just trying to open my man up. I think when someone gets going, just get him the ball until he gets cold.

I think I played good. I didn't score, yes. I missed a couple layups or shots or whatever. But I think I was focused and I was ready to go.

**Q. How much does just your playoff experience over the last five, six years, you've been past the first round many times, how much does that pay off in a series like this? Even if you go back to the 2020 series when you were in a similar spot against this team?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I think it's zero because every game is different. You may just have the experience of being here, whatever, every game matters. But I think it's zero because every game is different. Every team is a different team, different coach. We are different. I think it's zero, me personally.

**Q. I know you said you don't want to be a coach, but Jamal said that in your best English you were coaching the guys through that fourth quarter. Was it your best English, and what can you share -- I know you don't want to be a coach, but what can you share about what you were telling your guys?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, just -- we had an action that was working and just some details that can help us, help us get open shots. I think that's -- but when I'm trying to say something fast, my English is really -- now it's -- but when I'm trying to say something fast, it's extremely bad.



**Q. 30 assists tonight for you guys, Malone pointed that out a couple minutes ago. How happy are you to see your team in a game like this, a big game on the road that you guys still go back to that team-first style of basketball, of course that is essentially your game?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I love it just because then you can see everybody is moving. I think that's hard to guard when we are passing the ball. Mike had six, AG had four, I got eight, Jamal had six, Bruce had -- it's so -- how do you say when you're like poison -- not poison.

**Q. Contagious?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Contagious, yeah. I love it. I think that's the best brand of basketball. At least everybody enjoys it.

**Q. You represent the greatness of FIBA basketball and the great talent that is outside of the U.S. Are you aware of that?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Yes. But I still think USA has a lot to offer. They are in the last however many years, they every time have won it, just not when Spain won it. But I think we, European basketball or non-American basketball, can offer a lot of interesting quality basketball. I think it's really fun and interesting to see different style of basketball, different players, different styles of players. Even if you follow EuroLeague or whatever, it's different, but it's still interesting.

**Q. Guys often say that close-out games are the hardest ones to win, let alone the ones that give you a spot in the Finals. What are you expecting to change? What are you expecting to be more challenging? Why is that?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, to be honest, I'm not going to say that I'm scared, but I'm worried because they have LeBron on the other side and he is capable of doing everything. We're going to come here with the same mindset, same focus, and I think that's going to put us in a situation to win a game.

But we never know. They're going to be aggressive. Of course they're going to be extra physical, extra -- they're going to run more, they're going to -- everything is going to be on different level or one more of anything. So we will see.

**Q. Postgame I met your brother and Natalija and your family and they were all here. How happy are you that you saw your family come here to --**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Yeah, they're following me since day one,

eight or nine years ago. So it's always good to have someone on your side. It's great.

**Q. KCP was talking about how he felt like you guys missed an opportunity in Phoenix when you came out on the road. How did coming to L.A. this time around feel different in terms of your approach and mentality?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Mine, zero. I'm really focused on every game, and I think every game matters. Not just Playoffs, I think I play every game the same way, I think. If you put your mindset like that, every game is going to be similar to you. Not similar, but you're going to have the same approach, and that's going to help you through the season or through the career or whatever.

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