

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Monday, May 22, 2023

LeBron James

Los Angeles Lakers

Game 4: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 113, Los Angeles Lakers 111

Q. There were a few times in playoffs past you went the full 48, the series against Boston like three times in 2012 and a couple others. Is that something you decided before the game and being on the court that much, trying to find your legs that much, did that symbolize anything about what this run has been like for you?

LEBRON JAMES: For me it's just a mindset. Training the mind, you train the mind, the body will fall where it may and take care of the rest. Knowing, coming into a game where I may have to play a full game, that's just my mindset, and wasn't able to come through, and wasn't able to get the win. That was just my mindset going into tonight.

Q. Throughout the year, we've talked about how long this season was. I think I've seen you yawn more than I've seen anybody yawn through the course of a season. But how did this group energize you as it got into the postseason and as you got a chance to get one level away from the Finals?

LEBRON JAMES: I think it energized me from the moment I was out for those four weeks and just seeing the type of team that we had, the type of energy that we brought into the locker room, the type of energy we brought onto the floor. You know, I just couldn't wait to join these guys with action and get on the floor and I knew how much I could make an impact with the group of guys.

But it was always -- it was an exciting moment when we were able just to bring those guys into the locker room. You know, we were just a better team right away, and it results in getting to the Western Conference Finals.

Q. The franchise goal and your goal personally is championships in L.A. This group got close, eight wins away, but how do you view moving on to next year, year 21 with the Lakers, and do you think contender status now or there's upgrades to be made?



LEBRON JAMES: I haven't even thought about next year. I don't know.

Q. If I could stick to this year then. It was a four-game series. Every game had winnable moments and you guys certainly showed it. When you reflect on it, what were the margins, the edges that Denver ultimately was successful with?

LEBRON JAMES: Me and AD were just talking in the locker room for a little bit. I think we came to the consensus, this is if not, one of the best teams, if not the best team, we've played together for all four years. Just well orchestrated, well put together. They have scoring. They have shooting. They have play-making. They have smarts. They have length. They have depth. And one thing about their team, when you have a guy like Jokic, who as big as he is but also as cerebral as he is, you can't really make many mistakes versus a guy like that.

And even when you guard him for one of the best possessions that you think you can guard him, he puts the ball behind his head Larry Bird style and shoots it 50 feet in the air and it goes in, like he did four or five times this series [laughter]. So you do like this to him [tipping cap].

Q. How do you reflect on your individual season, year 20?

LEBRON JAMES: I really don't. It's not who I am. I guess I'll reflect on my career when I'm done. But I don't know. I'll let you guys talk about it.

The only thing I concern myself with is being available to my teammates, and I don't like the fact that I didn't play as many games as I would've liked because of injury. That's the only thing I care about is being available to my teammates.

Q. Is there a sense of frustration because of what happened throughout the course of this particular series?

LEBRON JAMES: I mean, of course, that's human nature when you're a competitor. Obviously frustrated. Not being able to close out one of these games where you were in every game. You know, two games in Denver, two games



here, were winning [in] every game. We were up 15 at the half. They hit us with a 36-point quarter, took momentum of the game. We still had an opportunity but just couldn't make plays down the stretch.

That's the frustrating part. You tip your hat to them. Like I said, it's a great team.

Q. How do you balance the disappointment of a missed opportunity but also look at this roster that's kind of reloaded and has potential for even greater things next year, potentially a championship roster, how do you balance the disappointment but also the hope for next year?

LeBRON JAMES: I mean, I don't know. Like I said, I haven't begun to even think about next year. We had a great run but we fell short of our goal. Our goal is to win championships. That's what this franchise is about and we fell short of that. That's disappointing.

Q. I'm curious if you would walk us through, the day starts with Carmelo Anthony, someone who you were, are, very close with, and your contemporary announcing his retirement and you getting ready to play in a Western Conference Finals game as the last man standing, if you will, from that class. What was that like for you?

LeBRON JAMES: Well, I kind of knew the announcement was going to happen because I shot the video a week ago [laughter] that you guys seen today. So, people probably think I'm lying about that, too, huh? I shot that video like a week ago, so I already knew the announcement was coming, just didn't know which day, but it happened today.

Still bittersweet, honestly. That's one of my best friends when I got into this league, even before I got into this league. We had so many moments when we were in high school from competing against each other to sitting outside of a hotel room at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning on the steps of a hotel and just talking about our journey up until where we were 17, I was 16, he was 17, and what we could possibly do going forward, what we could possibly do for our mothers, what we could possibly do for our families if we just continued to stay focused. I believe we was a driving force for one another. We were locked at the hip since high school.

And then you guys saw once we got into the NBA, he was always a motivating factor for me, being in the Western Conference, I was in the East. So, I would play our games and then rush home downtown Cleveland where I had an apartment my first two years in the league, and rushed and turned the Nuggets games on and watched Melo play. All

the way to the point where we didn't make the playoffs my first year, I was in Denver for his first playoff game. You could look that up, too, just in case you think I'm lying about that, too.

So definitely just a bittersweet moment today to see one of my great friends, I never say call it quits, just to say that, you know, it's an amazing run. An amazing accomplishment. An amazing career. And you know we just we'll always be joined at the hip no matter what.

Q. What, if anything, did Jokic prove to you during this series?

LeBRON JAMES: Nothing. I know how great he is. I know how great Jokic is. There are certain guys in this league that play the game a certain way, a certain way that I like to play the game as well, and he's one of them where you are always off balance when you are guarding a player like that because of his ability to score, rebound, shoot. He sees plays before they happen. There's not many guys in our league like that.

So you already knew you was going against a beast once the series started, and not only just about his game. Everybody gets cracked up into his stats but I don't think a lot of people talk about, like, this part of his game [indicating cerebral]. Maybe it's not talked about it, because a lot of people don't understand it, but I do. He's special.

Q. How confident are you with this roster to go into next year to say that you'll be back and not just be back, but go further?

LeBRON JAMES: To be honest, I'm not quite sure what the roster will look like next year. I think myself, AD, Max Christie, I think Vando has a team option, player option, something like that, I don't know who else -- I mean, the roster is not set. Obviously that's Rob and the front office, they are going to figure out the best way to put this team together to go forward in the fall. But it's not like we have a team full of multi-year guys that's stuck in a contract right now. So, I don't know, we'll see.

Q. There was a video making the rounds of you shooting before the game, and they were doing a rehearsal for the trophy presentation on the court. Did that motivate you or annoy you?

LeBRON JAMES: It was a little motivating factor for me tonight.

Q. Obviously all-time scoring record, another season where you essentially defeat Father Time again. On a

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

personal level, how would you evaluate the season that you had?

LeBRON JAMES: I don't know. I love to play the game. I love to compete. I love to be out there for my guys, my teammates, whoever I have that particular year. I think it was special in the fact that having a first-year coach, first-year coaching staff, to be able to take them to the Western Conference Finals, I think that's dope for Coach Ham and his coaching staff going forward. That's pretty amazing.

For me, it's all about availability for me and keeping my mind sharp and things of that nature, being present on the floor, being present in the locker room and bus rides and plane rides, things of that nature. It's challenging. It's challenging for sure. It was a very challenging season for me, for our ballclub, and obviously we know whatever went on early on or whatever the case may be. It was cool, a pretty cool ride.

But I don't know. I don't know. I think it was okay. I don't like to say it's a successful year because I don't play for anything besides winning championships at this point in my career. You know, I don't get a kick out of making a Conference [Finals] appearance. I've done it, a lot. And it's not fun to me to not be able to be a part of getting to the Finals.

But we'll see. We'll see. We'll see what happens going forward. I don't know. I don't know. I've got a lot to think about to be honest. I've got a lot to think about to be honest. Just for me personally going forward with the game of basketball, I've got a lot to think about.

Appreciate it.

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