

NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Monday, May 22, 2023

Anthony Davis

Los Angeles Lakers

Game 4: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 113, Los Angeles Lakers 111.

Q. How do you handle the mixture of disappointment in the end and especially the way that you guys go out relative to the way the season went, where you were in February and what you have potentially building? How is that something that's going to stick with you tonight or as you think about it moving forward?

ANTHONY DAVIS: Obviously it hurts right now, especially the way we lost. Not only to the paint but we gave away two games, three games, and then you add tonight and Game 2 and Game 3 as well. It's just tough. I mean, credit to Denver, obviously. They are a great ballclub, No. 1 team for a reason. Their players played well throughout the entire series. But it's tough. It stings.

But we've got to carry it into next season and keep this feeling and remember this season and use it as fuel coming into next year.

Q. You guys talked about the 0.3 percent chance of making it to the playoffs, and you've made it but now that you have lost and have been swept, what does the season mean to you and to this team to get to this point, even though you lost it?

ANTHONY DAVIS: Honestly, I haven't even thought about it. Obviously, we know where we started beginning of the year and where we got to but there definitely wasn't, you know, the end goal for us. Don't really do moral victories or anything like that. We play to win championships. Obviously came up short there on the fence. So, it's tough. But as the days go on, the weeks go on, you kind of think about it and kind of talk about it from there.

Q. LeBron told us that you and him talked about how you thought Denver was maybe the best team you guys have faced since you joined up. What does this group need to do to get to that level? Is it continuity? Is it more of a system? What do you think, understanding that who knows what this group could



potentially look like?

ANTHONY DAVIS: That's what I was going to say. We don't know what our group is going to look like. A lot of our guys are free agents. So who knows? That's a tough question. We don't know what team we have next year. But whatever it is, whoever we have coming to training camp with the mindset of building that chemistry, building that foundation, me and LeBron setting the tone, trying to get back here and further. I think we are more than capable of doing so. We've just got to do it.

Q. Understanding like you said that you guys don't do moral victories, did this season reset any of the realism of your guys' championship window for you and LeBron as a duo after a first-round exit and an empty season last year?

ANTHONY DAVIS: No, I mean, we still believe, obviously. Obviously, it's always a window. You don't have too many times where you compete for championships. He's lucky he won eight times in a row in the East. I have to do a better job of helping him out in that regard for myself, my own self looking into the mirror.

Yeah, we know the window is always small and obviously he's not getting any younger. You know, this is why this was so important to both of us, and it hurts that we didn't get it done. But you know, we regroup, figure out ways we can be better. Figure out ways I can be better, more consistent for our ballclub and we come back next year ready to go.

Q. Along similar lines, I feel like there have been some public doubt about you and LeBron and how far you guys could go as a group with the way the last couple years have gone. Obviously, it wasn't your goal of winning the championship but making the Western Conference Finals, having the turnaround that you guys had, do you feel like you reaffirmed that as long as we are both healthy, we are a contender, we can go far in the playoffs each and every year?

ANTHONY DAVIS: For sure, and the last two seasons, not including this year, you know, either I've been hurt or he's been hurt or we've both been injured.

So, you know for the most part, we were healthy through

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the second half of the year, and we were able to make it to the Western Conference Finals. Like I said, it's not the end goal, but we believed that both of us together were a dominant force, and you plug guys around us, and we can make it happen.

We believe that -- we don't really look for any support outside of anybody outside that locker room and the front office and the organization. We believe, and that's all that really matters.

Q. Can you describe your perspective on the determination you saw out of LeBron tonight coming out with the high energy, determination to score, 31 points in the first half, 4-of-4 from three, 5-of-5 from the line, and all this while he was visibly limping at times?

ANTHONY DAVIS: Yeah, you know, he came out on fire. He came out super aggressive, super hot, and we kind of just let him -- let him play. When a guy has it going like that, you kind of feed them. He kept us in the game. In the third quarter, we only score 16; I think they scored 36. That's kind of where the game was. We were kind of able to get back in it in the fourth.

Yeah, it's not surprising to me he came out like that. Arguably the best player to touch a basketball. He came out on fire. He came out super aggressive and kind of kept us in it in the first half.

Q. Now basically, now half of your Laker career, you've been on a team winning a championship or knocking on the door of a championship, and the other times not really close to that. How do you view moving forward into next year? LeBron mentioned only less than a handful of you guys are actually under contract but there are some options with this group. Do you feel like the franchise is in the right place to have next year be knocking on the door again?

ANTHONY DAVIS: Yeah, I mean, like I said, coming off a season of not making it to the playoffs, and then come back when didn't really have a chance and making it to the Western Conference Finals, we are definitely trending in the right direction.

Like I said, we don't know what the roster looks like next year, but I think the guys that came in in the second half of the season played well for us and also helped us into this situation. The guys that were here before just kept fighting through all the adversity that we had starting with the slow start everything and like that.

So you know, we are trending in the right direction. Obviously, the goal is to win championships, and we

wanted to be not just knocking on the door but actually get it done, walk through the door.

So that's our goal. That's our goal every time we step on the floor for training camp, and I'm a hundred percent sure that will be the goal next year.

Q. A couple of questions ago, you talked about how you could be more helpful to Bron or whatnot. You had some incredible stretches obviously during the season. What could you do to be more helpful? What specifically do you think you can work on in the offseason?

ANTHONY DAVIS: Work on everything. I never try to single out one thing. I mean, I can always get better at everything, shooting the three ball, handling, more efficient in the post, mid-range, everything, free throw line. Just making sure that I was better than I was last year.

Like I said, I know that he's not getting any younger, so I have to be that driving force to pick him up some games, and there's games where he goes off where he's kind of carrying the team, but we can't expect for him to do that for a full 82, and that's where I come into play.

I'm always a guy to look in the mirror. I'm my own biggest critic, and I know it's stretches throughout the season where I could have been better for our ballclub. There are stretches where I played extremely well for our ballclub. So, to find that consistency where it's always, you know, playing extremely well, not having those stretches where, to you guys, I played bad.

Q. Just tell me about Darvin Ham, what has he done, especially going through the ups and downs of the season and how helpful he has been in being a first-year coach?

ANTHONY DAVIS: Yeah, he always remained positive, no matter what. Even in the rough patches, he always preached positive, positivity. You know, make sure that we understood that it was a long season, and you don't find that in a lot of coaches, especially a first-year coach, first-year head coach.

He helped us through a lot, all the players, new guys coming in, communicating with them about what they want. He's definitely a player's coach. And it's great, first-year coach coming into the Western Conference Finals, big time. Obviously, we didn't want it to end that way but we definitely have a lot of respect for him in that locker room.

Q. Big part of this series obviously was Jokic and just going against him. When he's making shots, like the



one he made today, that step-back, one-leg three, what's it like defending him? Obviously, it wasn't just you, but what's it like defending a like Jokic?

ANTHONY DAVIS: You just tip your hat to him. He made those shots.

He's a two-time MVP for a reason. Hell of a player, scoring in multiple ways. He's not the most athletic but he has great footwork around the rim, great touch, step out and shoot it. Great passer.

You know, he did everything for them to make sure that they won. Hats off to him. The other guys played well, and they feed off of him. Even when he was struggling and missing shots, the other guys was -- he was getting the other guys involved and they were making shots.

It's a great ballclub over there and well coached, and they played extremely well against us.

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