

# NBA Western Conference Finals: Lakers vs. Nuggets

Monday, May 22, 2023

## Nikola Jokic

Denver Nuggets

Game 4: Postgame

Denver Nuggets 113, Los Angeles Lakers 111

**Q. Nikola, what's the first thing that goes through your mind when you seal Game 4, close it out on the road and you realize you made Nuggets history, first trip to the NBA Finals? What are you thinking?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I think you're just happy that you won a game. You beat a really, really good team. Every game but the first game was so close. Anyone could have won it, and we just find a way to win the game. Especially we were down 15, and to come back and win the game, it was just probably happiness. I think that's the emotions.

**Q. Nikola, you had talked the other day about saying you weren't scared but you were worried about LeBron James being on the other side. What were you thinking as LeBron had that monster first half, monster game? And what did it mean to you to mean Western Conference Finals MVP? What does that feel like compared to winning your two MVPs?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean, just because we know what LeBron is capable of, and he showed us what he's capable of in the first half. He was just dominating the game. But we found a way to make him take tough shots or just not easy layups or just not open shots. In the second half -- I think he was 11-for-13 in the first half, right? And then he was 3-for-12 in the second. So I think we did a good job in the second half.

To be honest, this is just -- I don't know, I don't think about MVPs anymore. I think people are just mean and saying that Embiid shouldn't have won it. I think he should have won it. I think he was playing, if you watch it, extremely, extremely tough basketball through the whole season.

I don't want to say a player doesn't mean that, but he was really amazing in 82 games or however many games he played.

**Q. I know you still have work to do, but who are you**



**most proud of, most happy for in this moment?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Ooh, I don't know. I'm going to say Jamal, just because he was -- like we said, he was injured, he was getting through a tough period. He thought they're going to trade him. And then the way he's leading us and how he's controlling the game and making shots, playing -- like even last year, this year and last year he's playing really well.

I think I'm so happy for Jamal, just proving that he's worth and he's a special player in this league.

**Q. How much more special is this opportunity knowing that you guys have held your kind of same core together and built this the right way for you and built this brand of basketball and built this culture all together?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I said it on the court. It's really from Sparky (Gonzales) and Gene (Marquez) to family Kroenke. I think it's something that we really build and we really -- like I was drafted by the Nuggets, Jamal was drafted by the Nuggets. Mike was drafted by the Nuggets. AG is here a little while now. We get great, great pieces in Bruce and KCP, Jeff was a really good veteran and CB, who is in the rotation.

To be honest, I don't want to say, it's literally everyone, not just players, and training and coaching staff. It's something that they're all here since I came here. Of course Wes (Unsel) left, Micah (Nori) left, (Chris) Finch left, Jordi (Fernandez) left, a bunch of guys left. But I think that showed, too, that we are doing something good, that people are leaving in this organization to better spots. I'm happy for everybody. So I think we are doing something nice.

**Q. The only break you got was the first couple minutes of the second quarter. How are you feeling after playing 45 minutes, and was there any point in the fourth quarter where you got a little tired?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: No, I think that's why players are so nice and so interesting, because you don't care about how tired you are, you don't care about minutes, your fouls, shots, percentage, this and that. You just want to win a game, and you're trying to win a game. Like sometimes -- today



we win it with the defense. It's such a great period of year for basketball, and just you can win it in every kind of possible way.

**Q. LeBron mentioned there were several shots you hit this series that you just had -- he literally took his hat off, said you just have to tip your cap. Obviously the late three like 2:50 left, off balance, somebody all over you, how are you so comfortable taking those shots, and what are you feeling as that thing leaves your hand?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: I mean -- you know what, I'm going to take this as my signature shot. (Laughter.) I'm joking. I don't know, in that situation you're just trying to shoot and you're just trying to score. To be honest, I think that's kind of the easiest shot because you need to shoot it. I was wide open in one possession and I was just driving it and LeBron took a charge, and if it's like more seconds I would shoot it. I think it's so easy to shoot when you know you've got to shoot it, so you just find a way to shoot it.

Being off balance, I'm off balance my whole life, so that's kind of normal for me.

**Q. You've told us many times that you never expected to be in the NBA. What's it mean to a guy who never expected to be here to have a chance to win a championship in the NBA?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: Yeah, I think I'm really happy for the guys and for the organization and just how we fight through. I remember the days when nobody was in our -- you could hear the ball bounce on the floor and there was no fans. And we have a sellout every other night.

Just for the organization, just for the people, just for Coach, for all the players that everybody doubt. I think I'm just happy, and it means a lot for me for the collective that we have.

**Q. I know you deleted social media a long time ago. Everybody digs up old tweets. There's one where you were saying, "Is anyone down for a pickup basketball game" back in 2011. Why did you delete social media, and how are you different from that kid back in 2011 asking for a pickup game?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: You know how hard it is to find a pickup game right now, especially in my hometown? I remember the days where you can just go outside at 5:00 in the afternoon and if you lose one pickup game you can basically go home. Now it's really hard to find six guys who can play. Because we play 3-on-3. It's not 5-on-5.

That didn't change, so if anybody wants to go play pickup, they can call me. (Laughter.) Just because, to be honest, I follow the guys who like playing professionally right now that like the 3-on-3 tournament, and Serbian guys are really, really good in that.

I remember back in the day how I played. I think maybe the talent that the engineer from upstairs gave me it's from playing 3-on-3, too.

And why I delete social media, I think it's a waste of time.

**Q. You said just now that you think you might be happiest for Jamal. Could you take us through that last play of the game as LeBron drives and sort of how important it was that Jamal was able to get his hands in there?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: We were so connected, everybody. We knew that we're not going to switch. We know they're going to open him up somehow. We knew we didn't want to switch, and we knew like as soon as Jamal goes, I was kind of inching in for Rui. I knew that AD was in the corner, so everything was so connected. It was great.

**Q. I don't know if you know him very well, Novak Djokovic. You guys are the two Serbian stars in sports. He's going to have Roland Garros coming, you're going to have this big Finals to play. Are you going to talk to each other about this?**

NIKOLA JOKIC: No, no. I don't have his number, to be honest. But he is a guy who represents Serbia in a much bigger scene. He's a Serbian ambassador. He's really an idol to the kids in Serbia, and not just on the court but the things that his foundation is doing. He is a guy you can look up -- I want to be like him. He is doing something great for kids, for Serbia, for everything. We are not going to -- we cannot be compared.

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