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| Well, for us it really is. To everybody else it might not be the next game or next playoff series, but to us it is. That's how we've approached every game in this postseason, from round 1 all the way from the Eastern Conference Finals and now to The Finals. That's the way we approach it. We don't try to make it more than what it is. It's a basketball game and we have to approach it like that, with our same mindset we've been doing throughout this postseason. Well, for me growing up it really wasn't bad for me because I wasn't really on professional sports at all. I didn't know what was going on with professional sports. I was just trying to play AU basketball and play little league football and things like that. So it really wasn't a big deal for me. But as I grew up and started to learn more about it and then being the No. 1 pick to Cleveland and knowing the history about Cleveland sports, it really meant a lot to finally bring home a championship to the city of Cleveland. You just seen how the fans reacted after. Just to have fun. I mean, this is fun times for us, and there should be no reason to add any more pressure onto it. This is fun times for us, and we've earned it. We've played just as many games as everybody else in this postseason, so we've definitely earned the right to be here. And at the same time, we have to be mentally focused and approach it like it's business. It's always been business for us throughout this postseason, and him being the only one as a player, besides Coach Brown, and Danny Ferry being part of the Finals, he knows what it's about, so we listened to his word and we approached him in practice yesterday and we're going to try to do the same today. I think defensively they're one of the best teams in the NBA. You know, they work well together on the defensive end. You know if you beat one guy, another guy steps up. They've been pretty good throughout the years on the defensive end. But it's no added pressure for me. There's no added pressure for our team to go out there and try to pressure. We just know we've got to go out there and play as hard as we can and give ourselves an opportunity to win. We've definitely been able to do that. My favorite Finals moment is probably the last shot Michael had in Utah to end the series, thinking that was going to be his last shot ever in the NBA uniform and to retire on top like he did, hitting a game-winner on the road, was definitely my No. 1 favorite moment of watching the NBA Finals. That was pretty nice, too (laughter). Me? Cleveland? Yeah, that's why we're here (smiling). We're going to try to do our best to bring it there, absolutely. No, absolutely not (laughter). I feel like -- I just feel like a veteran. I don't say I don't feel 22, I'm not hurting or anything like that, my body is not down or anything like that. I just feel like when you look at a guy like Daniel Gibson playing on the backcourt with you, or you look at Sasha and Andy, you know these guys look like younger guys to you, but when you really look at it, Sasha and Andy are really older than me, but I'm kind of the leader and I'm kind of the role model for those guys. As a basketball player, I don't look -- I don't feel 22 until I really get off the court, and then I'm back and doing my usual video games and running around the house and stuff with my son, things like that. That's when I feel 22 again. I don't know. That's not my room to say. You know, when you look at guys who become greats, it's because of their athletic ability and their ability to do the things that they did as an individual, and I don't get involved in individual things like why do they base your game on and things like that. That satisfies me more than anything about winning a championship, just to get the satisfaction for my teammates. I think you become one of the greats by doing a lot of things as an individual. They don't base that on your team's perspective and things like that. That is definitely fun. It is fun to really know that you can get stops on the defensive end, and I've been on both sides of the fence where I couldn't get stops or as a team we couldn't get stops, and it made it harder on the offensive end. When you have a coach that tells you, hey, you guys go out there and get stops, you play defense for me and I'll let you do what you want on the offensive end, then it makes you play a lot harder. It's a pride thing for us, and it's a pride thing for me to say I don't want my man to score. You know, I kind of played both sides of the fence. I played offense and defense in the Detroit series and I took pride in doing it because I don't want to be the one guy on the court that's not playing defense and I've got four other guys working their ass off on the defensive end. It's not about that. You've got to play both sides of the fence. It just brings so much excitement when you know you can go out there and get a stop and get a run out on the other end. I'm very quick. I've always got compliments on that from coaches I've played for saying I'm a quick learner. I'm able to adjust fast to what's going on throughout the course of a game or throughout the course of life, honestly. I've been pretty good with it thus far. Well, it is, but it was a different situation for us also being in the Eastern Conference Finals, never being part of that as an individual. I learned from game to game to game how to adjust. How do you adjust for the road crowd, how do you adjust for the home crowd. I mean, I don't know, how can I explain it to you until I get into the fire, and then I'll be able to adjust on the fly and I'll be able to answer a lot better probably after Game 1, let you know how I was able to adjust throughout the course of the ballgame. I feel great. I'm ready. No, we haven't been on the everyone-picks-the-Cleveland-Cavaliers side yet (smiling), so there's nothing new for us. We just go out there and we play great basketball. You earn respect and you get respect by playing great basketball, and we've done that throughout the last two years. We haven't looked in the paper yet and seen the Cavaliers is picked to win the series or picked to win the game, so it's nothing new. You definitely give a lot of credit to the Spurs. They definitely played well tonight defensively, offensively. Some of it was me missing a lot of the shots that I usually make and some of it was the defense that they put on me and on our team in general. It's like a half and half thing. We're going to have to make adjustments. You're coming to Game 1 you don't know what to expect. We don't know what they're going to run against us offensively. We've got to make adjustments in Game 2. A lot of credit to the, they played extremely well defensively. It's a series. Things happen. They're up 1-0 and we'll make adjustments and be ready for Sunday. It was definitely crowded. They did a great job of shrinking the floor. If I went by one guy, another guy stepped up, something I'm going to have to make an adjustment for for Game 2. I'll definitely be ready to counter some of the things they did defensively. I didn't play extremely well, definitely. Not just shooting the ball, but the six turnovers was uncharacteristic of me in the postseason, tried to force a lot of passes in there that looked open at times but really wasn't. I have to play better, and for us to win, me being the leader of this team, I have to play better in order for us to have a chance to win down the stretch, and my teammates know I'm going to bring my better effort in Game 2. I feel good. A lot of shots I took is shots that I make. They felt pretty good, they just didn't fall for me. Things like that happen. You have one off night, but the thing like this is it's not like the NCAA tournament where you have one game and you're out. We've got to regroup and be ready for Game 2. Same answer I keep giving. We don't know. We haven't put our finger on the third quarter yet. We did a better job last year in Game 5 and Game 6 of playing great basketball in the third quarter, but once again it caught up with us again. We don't know what it is but we did a great job of figuring it out. We're going to do it pretty soon. We definitely want to get a win on this floor before we go back home. No, it doesn't. I know I'm going to see a lot of double teams, at times triple teams. It's something I've seen before and it's something I've been able to adjust to from game to game and in different series of this postseason. It's not like I've never seen a double-team or triple-team before, I just have to play better, and I definitely have a better effort on Sunday. I think defensively he's very good. He's one of the best defensive players in this league, and the guys behind him help him a lot. It gives him an opportunity to get up into me and force me into the bigs, and the bigs are very good, Elson and Duncan, of course. He has a lot behind him. He doesn't have to do it by himself. I'm able to go right and left, so there's nothing that I can't do out on the ball court. I'll just have to make an adjustment and come into Game 2 with a better mindset and try to get a win. That's definitely a fair assessment and I have to do a better job of trying to recognize that, trying to attack north and south instead of east and west. They tried to make me dribble out towards the side line. The bigs did a great job coming off pick-and-rolls, of showing hard and allowing Bruce to get underneath the big, try and attack me coming right underneath the big. I think our coaching staff is very aware of what was going on, what happened in Game 1. I think our players are very aware of what happened in Game 1, and we'll make an adjustment. It's not like we haven't been in this situation before. |
| I watched it twice, same answer as yesterday. I don't want to dwell on it. I don't want to put too much inside my thinking process on what I'm going to do to attack their defense. It's just mentally and just trying to read the defense as much as possible and just try to be better the next game. I've done a great job of preparing myself from one game to another, and I definitely feel like it's going to be a bounce-back game for me tomorrow night. that's a great question. I did have my girlfriend TiVo(r) the Sopranos definitely so when I get home I'll be able to watch it. But I think I'll be more focused on Tony Parker, even though I am a fan of Tony Soprano. Me and my guys have definitely sat down and think about it. My friends think that either the Feds are going to come and get him or he's going to make friends with the Feds and maybe snitch on a lot of people, or he's going to be whacked, which I don't think is going to happen. I hope that he's just able to get away and not worry about nothing (laughter). I'm serious, I'm a big Sopranos fan, and this is the first time I finally got a question which is not the same question I've been hearing all year. I appreciate that. That was awesome because I told you I'm pretty tired of answering the same questions, so I appreciate it. I hope not. No, absolutely not. Congratulations. I didn't know that. Congratulations to him and his family. That's awesome. I'm expecting any day. Well, I'm not (laughter). That would be kind of weird, but Savannah is expecting any day. I think it's a great time for his family, and it's not going to take away from nothing that he does on the basketball court. No, we're just going to -- she's going to just play it by ear. Whatever happens, happens. We're very excited about it, and we can't wait. Just like I said in the last series, I think they're very good when you allow them to set up in the half court defensively, and that's the same with Detroit. Just try to get up and down the court a little bit quicker and try to get some earlier looks on the shot clock where they're not set as much. Try and make the easy pass, don't go for the hard pass. They're very good at shrinking the floor and closing out some of my shooters. We have to do a better job of dribble penetrating, getting to the lane and then kicking out instead of just making the hard pass from one side of the court to the other side. Offensively and defensively we're a lot better. We did play pretty good defense, but offensively were weren't sharp at all. I wasn't sharp offensively, and that trickles down to the rest of our team. If I'm not sharp then it's going to be very tough for us to win ball games. Mentally we had a great practice yesterday and we're looking forward to having another one today. Are you a shooting coach? I'm looking for one (laughter). I've been told that before. It's just sometimes it's natural for me to fade. You know, I think a lot of my shots go in when I fade, a lot of them go in when I jump straight up, so it's something I'm definitely going to work on and get better with. But trajectory and all that stuff, I don't know. I don't know (smiling). I just think -- It's not easy at all. That's why I'm not sitting out there, I guess. He's definitely a team-oriented guy, and he communicates well with his teammates, and that's off the court. You know, it's definitely family first with him and basketball second, and any time you get an opportunity to sit down with a guy like that -- you know, we have a guy like that on our team, Eric Snow, who really cares about everything else besides basketball because basketball is going to take care of itself. You really respect a guy like that who really respects your family and things that you do off the court, community service, things like that and things besides basketball. I think that means a lot to a person like me, and I really respect Bruce and Eric being open like that. Well, you definitely look at it and see how you can attack it a little bit better. But it's not going to make me that much more passive. I've definitely faced double-teams and triple-teams throughout this postseason, so I have to do a better job of trying to attack the double-team early and see if I can swing it to the other side to a teammate that can make a play, also. We got into too many late shot clocks in Game 1, which is not good for us. We don't work well when we get into the shot clock down at 3 and 2 on the clock, and it makes us make bad plays. We just have to do a better job of trying to attack the double-team and being a little bit more aggressive getting to the lane. The last movie I saw was -- what was it? I don't remember. Spiderman III was the last movie I seen. It was a little bit too romantic, but it was very good. It was very long, but it was a little bit too romantic for me, I guess. I liked the black Spiderman. He was very funny. He couldn't dance at all, but he was very funny. We're definitely still confident. It doesn't matter if you lose by 1 or lose by 30 with us. A loss is a loss, and we've been down 2-0 before in this situation, so we have to find a way to bring the intensity that we did in the fourth quarter tonight and carry it on to Game 3. I don't know, I think the fourth quarter we just realize that it's a pride thing then, and we don't want to get blown out. We're here for a reason, and it becomes a pride thing in the fourth quarter when you're down so many points. I think it's just an upgrade from series to series, you know, from the first round to the second round, Conference Finals, and then to The Finals it's an upgrade. It doesn't matter who it is, the intensity level automatically picks up. The team is better. It doesn't matter if it's Detroit or the Spurs. Every round gets a little harder. I think the intensity is a big difference. Like I said, I don't -- you give the Spurs a lot of credit, but everyone knows that each round picks up, and the team picks up. You get better after you win one series. You get better when you win the Conference Finals and get to The Finals. You get better as a team, and the intensity definitely picks up. It's not a good thing for me. I can't remember the last time I didn't play 40-plus minutes. I got two quick fouls and it definitely didn't work in our team's favor. I wanted to be out there to try to help my team win, and being in early foul trouble definitely hurt us. We can play better. We can play harder. It shows, the difference the first three quarters or the first half compared to the second half. At one point we were shooting 57 percent from the field, and that hasn't been us. We have to find a way to pick up our intensity and carry on what happened in the fourth quarter into the rest of the game. I don't know (laughing) you know, he's very good, probably the second best point guard we've played in this postseason. Jason Kidd is one, I think Tony Parker is two. No matter what you do he's going to find a way to get into the paint. He can finish over big guys, finish over small guys. They have a great one in Tony Parker for sure. No, that's kind of a cop-out. We don't want to go zone. We're a man team, we have to man up and try to keep him out of the paint. We have to make our best effort. We made him take a lot of jump shots tonight, which he made. He made a three. I think when he's shooting the ball as well as he did tonight there's no way you can stop him. He definitely did a great job defensive, came up with a lot of blocked shots, rebounded the ball extremely well on the offensive and defensive rebound. He's been here before, and it's nothing new to him. It doesn't matter if he's out there for five minutes or for 25 minutes, he's definitely going to give his best effort, and he was definitely a spark off the bench. It's definitely going to be a great experience I think for all Cleveland fans, for northeast Ohio, for the whole state of Ohio. It's going to be something that hasn't been experienced in a long, long time for our city, for our fans. It's going to be electrifying. If you're not there, I expect you to try to get there. No I just think he understands how to play the game of basketball, and he knows that he's going to get some great looks, but he knows if the guys run him off the three-point line, he knows how to finish in the lane. He's getting better every game, every series, and it's great to see him grow and watch him continue to grow. I think he's definitely one of the best players on our team. |
| On the three-pointer? We had to go for a three, we were down three points. You know, it went in and it came out. No, incidental contact. Incidental contact. It didn't affect my shot. I had a good look at it and I missed. Oh, absolutely. I had been aggressive in the fourth quarter. I was definitely going to get it back from Andy, but Andy made a good move. He just over-shot it. I definitely wanted to try to get a good look at it or give my teammate a better look at it, but it was just miscommunication. Well, tonight was definitely a couple. I didn't think that went my way. I had an offensive foul, but I didn't think that was a foul. Their defense was definitely good, and they're definitely making me work for everything I do. Well, everybody has to still believe. You know, it is the first of four games, but we dug ourselves a big hole, and we have to come out aggressive and just continue to play hard. We gave ourselves a chance to win tonight and that's all we can ask for. Absolutely. We can't live on history, but at the same time we have dug ourselves a big hole, and we know that. We have to come out and try to win four straight games. This is all about them. They played very good defense. They played elbows and boxes and if I'm coming off someone that's there and I have to swing the ball to a teammate or I come off a pick-and-roll and they're there again. It's all about me not trying to force anything and to try to go for it when I can. I did a good job of not forcing it tonight, got into the lane and missed a couple bunnies that rimmed in and rimmed out. Definitely I found some creases tonight. It was definitely good for them because Manu struggled, Tony struggled, and Tim Duncan didn't shoot the ball well from the field, so Bruce definitely kept them in the game in the first half hitting three big threes, and defensively he's very good. So he definitely helped them. I'm not surprised on how tough it is. I kind of envisioned it being tough. I think the Eastern Conference Finals was tough, and I knew it was going to pick up another level. I think our team senses that, also. You know, the experience factor, we don't like to make any excuse, but it definitely played a part in this Finals against a world power team in the Spurs. Definitely. I think Coach Pop and their defensive staff has put in a great defensive plan against me. Any little crease I find they're still having guys coming over me, and if I do finish they make me finish over bodies. I really expect that and I love the challenge. It's fun going out there and seeing different defenses and trying a pick here and a pick there. You've got to give all the props to the Spurs and all the props to Coach Pop and his staff. They've done so far a wonderful job. |
| You know, definitely they're doing a great job. You know, I was definitely trying to read to see what they're doing at a particular time of the game. You know, you see one guy, you might see two and now you can see another one. So it's definitely a collective defensive attacks that they're putting on me and putting on our team. You know, I've got to read the defense first. I've always done that. I'd go on two dribbles and they'd go on the double-team. We had some great looks, we just didn't knock them down. All the shots we took from the outside was good looks. We've just got to step in and make them. Just got to continue to take them, feel confident about it and go up there and take that shot. You know, I know I can make them, I think my teammates know they can make outside shots, we've just got to continue to take them. Definitely I thought there was some contact, but we don't want to try to make that as an excuse of why we lost the game or if it could change the game. We had opportunities where we could have made shots before that and not put ourselves in a position to be down three with five seconds to play. I think we all know there was some contact, but that's neither here nor there, so we don't get involved in that. I play my game. My game is what I've been doing. I see a double-team, I get a ball up. If I don't see a double-team I try to attack and get into the lane. If I've got an outside shot, I'll take it. I can't change my game, what got us here. Everything I've been doing is the reason why we're here, and our team, everything we've been doing, is the reason we're here. We don't want to try to change anything but we know our backs are up against the wall and we have to try to win Game 4. Well, you have to. We have no choice but to win or the season is over and there's a new champion. We have to come out with the mindset to take one game at a time and just continue to try to win four in a row. Hopefully we can do that. I think individually he's great. I think what also helps him is the guys that's behind him. You know, it's not one guy in this league that can play defense on an individual by himself. I think as a team they're very good, which allows him to pressure, which allows him to do a lot of things that some other defenders can't do because they don't have that back line behind him. When you have a seven-footer in Tim Duncan and Oberto and Robert Horry, and you have Manu that closes in when they try to drive, it allows his one-on-one defense to be a lot more pressure, that much more physical because he knows he has that help behind him. Individually he's great, but those guys behind him also helps him. Well, I think Detroit, they tried to drop a lot of pick-and-rolls and tried to weak me left on the top. I wasn't as aggressive around the perimeter, which allowed me to get into the lane a little bit. I think San Antonio is not allowing me to come off screens without seeing another body, simple as that. I'm seeing one or two, and if I'm getting around two I'm seeing another third guy. They definitely have picked up in intensity, and we have to be able to exploit that. If they're going to put two guys on me, we have to be able to do something on the backside, and if I get a ball, I have to be even more aggressive on trying to get it back when we're swinging from one side to another. Well, definitely. We've had opportunities where I've kicked it out of the post and nobody has had an opportunity to swing, swing or we took that first look. Maybe we needed to swing it from one side to another to get something on the backside and therefore rotate. I think that would help. Well, it's just kind of a mental thing trying to get ready and get prepared for the game. You know those shots are not going to be there during the course of a game because you have defenders guarding you, of course, but I think just getting a warm-up, just getting a workout before the game mentally prepares you for the game definitely. We gave ourselves a chance to win last night, and I've always said, and I said all year and all throughout the postseason, you give yourself a chance to win you can't feel down about it. Defensively we were very active last night. Offensively we got some great looks, we just weren't falling. I was able to get into the lane a couple times and missed a couple bunnies. We don't want to get swept, of course. We're not even thinking about that. We're thinking about winning a game and continuing to try to win and win a championship. It's awesome. I think they have a dynasty already at work, and I think Coach Popovich and that staff and being able to get the No. 1 pick in Duncan has really helped their franchise and the pieces here and the pieces there to make that team a championship team. They don't have the greatest athletes in the world, they don't have the greatest shooters in the world, but they have probably the greatest team in the world, and that's what this sport is all about. It's not about an individual. It's not like tennis, it's not like golf. You have to have one unit. You have to have everybody on the same page at the same time to win basketball games. With him being a part of that franchise, why shy away from it? When you want to be the best, you want to try to mirror image the best, and they're definitely the best team in our league at this point in time. You want to try to do as close or exactly to what they do. And it's going to be tough because they've been together for so long, but at the same time, you want to try to just take a little bit of something from there and try to input it into your system, definitely. No, if they would have heard him we would have called a time-out. The time-out looking back at it when we got the ball, didn't seem like he was calling a time-out. I think he was trying to communicate more to the refs than to us, you know, and it's -- it's no one's fault but we didn't know. Look at that, we call a time-out there, then we don't have the two to try to tie the game up at the end, so it kind of worked in our favor. We took some confidence from Game 2 to Game 3. We played with that last night. We had a lot of energy, defensively we played extremely well. We didn't allow them to get whatever shot they wanted like in San Antonio. At the end we gave ourselves a chance to win. We still feel confident. It's all about the first team getting No. 4. They're definitely closer than we are, but at the same time, the series is not over until somebody hits four. It definitely could have been better. It could have been better in order for us to win. You know, if I don't play well, our team is not going to have a good chance to win. You know, I've got a lot of things to work on to get better for next year. There's no one thing that I want to focus on intensively, it's just everything. I need to definitely get better, and once I get better, our team will automatically get better, and I know that. I have to do everything that I've done well and try to improve in order for us to be a better team next year. I'm not sure. You know, you're definitely disappointed. I'm not disappointed in our effort the last two games, not at all. I think we played well. We definitely just faced a better team in this series, simple as that. I really think the team we have now is good enough to win a championship, and I really stressed that from the beginning. It just shows we went up against a better team, simple as that. We went up against a better team in this series, and everybody has to be better coming into next season. I have to be ten times better. Our team has to be ten times better. As individuals, if we all put in the work this summer and come to training camp next year, our level automatically rises. I'm just excited about what happened with our team this year. You know, we gave it all. We did what we said, made it to the championship, try to win the championship. We won the Eastern Conference Championship. We wanted to win the big thing, but when we look back on it, hopefully we can be satisfied, or not satisfied, but happy with what we have done. I didn't. I didn't want to turn around at all and look at it, but I've seen other teams win the title before, me watching on TV, so I know what they were doing. But I didn't turn around and look at it (smiling). I didn't want to look at it. I don't think so. I felt great throughout the whole season. Everyone at this point is -- everyone is injured at this point, everyone is a little fatigued. It's not an excuse. I definitely felt good coming into this series, and I think the defensive intensity and some of the things they did kept me off guard and kept the team off guard. The turnovers are uncharacteristic of what happened. It was a lot of unforced things, me losing the ball or me making bad passes. It's all things I can control, and I wasn't able to do that. We have to be better. Me, as an individual, I have to be much better on and off the court, and that will carry our team to higher levels. I think it starts with me first and then it will trickle down to everybody else. I'm not sure. We haven't really talked about it. You know, we went up against a better team. We know the Spurs is definitely the better team in this series. They played like it. They never got rattled when we made runs. They never sped up. They played their own tempo, and they kept us off balance. I think we learned that as good as we thought we was, there was still a team out there that was better than us. I was just basically congratulating him on a wonderful season, on his championship. He's definitely a great player and he has a great supporting cast around him. I think it's great. If I couldn't do it, why not Tim Duncan? He's definitely a very good player, and he definitely brings out the best in his teammates. I think I kind of want to do the same thing and try to do the same thing with my teammates, so we're kind of the same player, me in the perimeter, him in the post. So why you ask me what he said? |