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| I am what I am. I don't know how else to explain it. I've been the same way all my life, and it is what it is. But if you've got some endorsements out there that you can throw my way, I'll take them (laughter). I think he should retire so I can catch up with him. That's my personal opinion. You know, what he brings to the table year in and year out, it's something you can't measure. His experience, his timeliness, and of course we understand the way he hits big shots. But he's one of those guys you can put in the game and you're just never worried about what he's going to do because you know he's going to do the right thing. Of course it shows in the championships that he's won and the different teams you've done it with, and the right situations he continues to put himself in. What he does for us is immeasurable. I cannot relate to him in any way, honestly. I was in a much different situation. I was on a veteran squad and I was more of a piece of the puzzle. I think he's a much bigger piece of this puzzle. They're asking him to do a lot more. I don't know what our age difference was, but I'm going to imagine I think I was a little older than him. But I had guys like Avery and Dave and Sean and Mario. These were veteran guys that had been around the league. The ability to kind of lean on him and follow them through it is I think a bit of a different situation than LeBron has. Absolutely. It's absolutely impressive. I don't think I deny the fact that it's impressive what he's done thus far to get here. What the team was from a couple years back, and then to pick him and to put the right pieces around him, I think a lot of credit to Danny and Mike and the rest of the Cavs organization for putting that together. But of course, again, he's a big part of that and a big part of that turnaround in getting to this point. He'll prepare them well. I think him and Coach Egan and we've got a couple of other guys that were there that have been around our system and been with us for a couple years. But the beauty of the NBA Finals is there are not too many secrets. I think you go in and you face a team, there are not too many things you're going to sneak people with. You have to execute your stuff, you have to bring the effort, you have to be able to play well for all that we can bring to the table and all that he can bring to the table about the opposing teams. It's about going out there and actually doing it. Again, I can't answer that one. I've found it works for me and it's something I've stuck with. As I said, it makes shots easier for me, and as long as it works, I stick with it. I can't answer the question why nobody else uses it. Well, I think having another big guy in the backcourt in the NBA, having someone that you can count on, is a really big deal. You don't see that in too many places where you can look across and have two big guys that can play at the same level. And in saying that, I think you've got to give a lot of credit to the other guys that were on that team, also, along with Dave, Sean and Avery and Mario. As I said, of course, those guys along with Dave were the ones that kind of put that team together, kind of kept -- made it easier for me to play the game and not be so stressed about it. I'm expecting a lot of changes, a lot of different things. I'm guessing that Mike won't throw a steady diet of anything at me. I'll have some opportunities to play a little bit of one-on-one basketball, I'll see a lot of double teams, I'll see double teams come from different areas. I've got to imagine that he's got a bunch of things that he'll throw at me and not just -- try to change it up so I don't know what's coming. It was an evolution, and just as I was brought into the situation with those guys, same thing with me. I was given the opportunity to have an influx of kind of young guys with Manu and Tony and Bruce being here for a couple years, and it's our responsibility to kind of bring them along. I hate to say responsibility now because those guys have been through this situation and they've got the experience just like we do. So we're just at a good point with a good mix of guys, young, old, guys who have been through it. It's just a good mix right now. I don't know how else to answer that. The fly under the radar question. It doesn't matter to us. It doesn't matter. It's great, it's wonderful for the NBA, it's wonderful for NBA fans. I think there's a lot of hype behind these Finals, and that's great for us, too. We're not worried about who gets the hype or what gets the hype, we're about winning four games and worrying about it then. All in all I thought we did a pretty decent job. Fourth quarter we gave up a little more than we should have. I thought they did a good job of dissecting it big towards the end there. But all in all I thought we contained very well. We did a pretty good job on LeBron, not giving him the lanes that he's used to. We won the game, we held them to 76 points. That's right where we need to be. Honestly that's not something I was looking for. We were just trying to stick with the game plan and doing the same stuff. Honestly I didn't know he was 0-for-7. I knew we were doing a pretty good job on him, but I didn't know his numbers. He's so good at finding guys with his size, we just needed to keep hands in there. Like I said, we got a couple hands on balls, which helped our defense a whole lot. Well, you have to. You've got to in this league. Stars carry teams, and our coaches do a great job of putting a game plan together, and if we're able to stick to it, we do a pretty good job of containing people. It helps a little bit to have somebody like Bruce. That's definitely not something you look past. He's guarded every position throughout these playoffs, and he's done a great job with it. So a lot of credit to him. But all in all, our team defense tonight was really good, and I think that's what's going to be the key for us. It takes five guys understanding what we're doing, understanding a game plan and sticking with it. Even with the repicks and the reposts and everything else, it might be a different guy in the play, but we've been sticking to what we do. I think that's a lot of credit to our coaching staff getting us prepared at that point, and five guys on the floor, whoever it may be, getting it done. Five of them played great tonight. Francisco stepped up and played really well for us, got us some stops, some rebounds, scored a couple points. We just get play from different people. I think guys continue to step up, guys that aren't usually there continue to step up for us. I was surprised the first two shots I made that I got to the rim, yeah, absolutely. They adjusted their defense and I don't think I got as easy a look for the rest of the game. But to start the game, to come out of the gates and have two baskets like that helped me tremendously. Tony gets to the rim all the time, and there's no knocking anyone, the Cavs or anyone else. But with his quickness, his ability to finish in the lane, he gets in there almost at will. People make adjustments and he's got to make adjustments, too. I have no doubt they'll try to prevent that as much as possible and really pack that lane in. But night in and night out, he does it against just about anybody. It's night and day. I honestly didn't know what to expect with him coming in here. I knew he was incredibly young, I knew he had some quickness to him. I had no idea he'd become the player he is right now. Now he's, for lack of a better term, been through hell and back. He's been through every situation, every level of competition possible, and he's as much of that as anybody else at 25, 26 or 24, I don't know. Oh, I think we both -- he actually didn't see the play. He threw the ball and bumped into Varejao, went down on the ground, and when he got up, he was walking by me, and he kind of looked at me, and he was like, "Did you make that?" He's like, "You missed?" I'm like, "Yeah, sorry about that." But nothing more than that. I did see that, and we gave up 27 points in that fourth quarter, a couple more than we want to in a situation like that. We kind of let them back into the game a little bit. I think they only got it to nine or something like that, but striking distance at least. They got a couple easy things. Of course LeBron hit those two threes in a row, which were great shots, but they got a lay-up or two and they got a wide-open shot or two. Those are just things we've got to clean up. I think they started to figure some stuff out, and so it's just about getting back that focus that we had in those first three quarters. I don't know that we specifically need to change much of anything, but we just need to make some adjustments and make sure that we're not giving those easy shots up in the beginning of the game this next one. A little bit of loss of focus. They're smart basketball players, they're a smart team. It took them that long to figure out what we were doing, and maybe they have. I figure it's a little bit of lost focus, maybe they figured some stuff out. And the whole Finals, the series, every series is about a little bit of adjustments, and they'll make some adjustments and we'll have to do the same. What does he do better than anyone? He gets it in the lane and gets to the basket. He gets shots right up to the rim. They have arguments all the time about who's the fastest in the NBA, and I don't know if he's the fastest, but he will get around just about anybody and he'll get in that lane. For his size, he has just a great ability to make shots over people, and I think also his ability to stop on a dime, to shoot a floater or go right to the basket. It's so hard for a defender to stop and stay in front of that with all those options. So if it's one thing, I think it's just finishing at the basket, getting there and finishing. I think the team played well yesterday. I thought we played well yesterday. But those guys are going to make adjustments. Doing what we did last night is a promise those guys are going to be better defensively. They're going to change their game plan so Tony can't get in the lane as easily. And in years past it's been just that; teams have come out, we've played a good Game 1, Tony has played a good Game 1, myself, and they've made adjustments and things have changed a little bit. I think he's more adept now to being aware of those adjustments and being able to adjust on the fly. So that's something we're going to have to do anyway; we're going to have to be ready for what they're going to bring to us. They're not going to allow us to get to the basket as easily as we did. They're not going to allow us to get some of the shots that we did. They're going to make their adjustments and we're going to have to make ours. That never happened, so I'm happy about that and I'm happy that Tony is playing. Let's just leave it at that. |
| I don't think there's only one thing. I think every year we go through the situation where we don't start off the greatest and kind of work our way into it. I remember there were times where he pointed to that fact or those guys had more of a drive than we did. I don't believe that was the case. I don't honestly agree with him on that point. But we took some -- it took us some time to really start getting to play the right way, and once we started playing the right way, bang, we're right back in it. I cannot describe the style of play on the court, no. He's all over the place. He does -- he's great for our team because he brings the style of play where you can't really -- you don't know what he's going to do. He makes it up on the fly. He's an aggressive -- incredibly aggressive player. He just finds a way to make things happen. A lot of us play within our system, and he's one of the guys that will step out of that box, will can the whole thing and take it in a different direction. It can be an overwhelming situation with the attention, with how close you are to being that final team. It can be a lot of pressure, and being here for the first time, having a young team as they do, having a young leader as they do, that doesn't help. They have very few vets that have been to this level, and you don't want to give them a lot of credit, but it really does help when you have people that have been there and have been through the situation and can kind of flow with it a little bit more. As these games continue on, I can imagine those guys will get more and more comfortable and find out that it's still basketball and you're still out there. Once you get out on that court it's the same old game and they'll get a little more comfortable. Hopefully we can continue to play that to our advantage with our experience, but those guys are going to get comfortable and we're going to have to really bring our A games and understand that they're going to be playing their best at the right time. We've looked at some stuff, and we have to imagine they're going to make some changes. We anticipate a couple things, but there's no way to really tell. You have to anticipate some stuff and be able to counter it in game instead of waiting for a whole other game and letting it slip by. Our coaching staff is great at that. They're great at seeing things that happen, seeing things that could hurt us coming up and trying to give us a little bit of advance on it. We've done just that, and hopefully we can go into this game and do the same job in executing our game plan as we did in the first game. For whatever reason it's what the Spurs have been labeled as. For whatever reason, we're just kind of looked by in that respect. Honestly, I think Pop likes it that way. He's in it every step of the way. I believe he's as good as anyone ever, but it doesn't matter to him. He's about that challenge every year, about putting a team back together every year, about getting guys to play the right way, and whatever recognition comes with that down the line, it'll come in time. He'll deal without any extra needed attention. I can't answer that question. I don't know. I don't know why a small market would matter. Whether you win or lose games or win championships, I don't know why that would matter. I think some guys were nervous, absolutely, thinking that with our sporadic play that was going to happen to give us a little bit of a boost, and I think that was specifically what we needed. We needed him to come in there, and that's the change that he decided, that there weren't going to be any changes. I think that's the news that we got, and I think it helped. I think it pulled guys together, I think it got guys comfortable knowing that something was going to happen. They were here to play and this is who we had to o it with. I think it helped guys step up. There have been very few dynasties. I don't know that we can consider ourselves a dynasty, but that's me on the inside looking out. Dynasties are the things that the Lakers of the 80s and the Celtics, those are who you consider dynasties, teams that have done it for many, many, many years. Hopefully we can look back in a couple years and be considered something like that. But as of now, I can't imagine that we would be considered alongside those guys. Winning is our goal. What that equals in the long run, you can define it however you want to. Winning is our goal. Life would have been a lot different. It was probably a lot closer decision than people even think or even know, but it's worked out the right way, to say the least, and I can't even go through all the factors that went into making the final decision to come back here. But just the organization and the people and the situation, and as I said, obviously it worked out the right way. As I said, it was the people and the organization here at the Spurs that I was used to, and not only the players. Of course David was here, and that was great, and I had a couple other guys here that I loved being around. But even beyond that, the staff, the coaches, guys I was comfortable with, guys I enjoyed being around is probably what swayed it in the end. |
| I'd like to hope we had something to do with it. Like you said, they just didn't shoot the ball well. I thought they got some pretty decent looks. They hit some shots down the stretch there. We were up eight, ten points and they started making some shots. So the first stretch they started making some shots. Defensively I thought we were pretty solid. There weren't a whole lot of free throws on our end. There weren't a whole lot of easy looks on our end. But we kind of stuck with it. And the same with them, we made everything tough for them. We figured they were going to do something to change something. Gibson had been playing 30 something odd minutes anyway, so we've seen enough of him that we didn't have to make much of an adjustment. We didn't change a whole lot of what we did. We understood the kind of shooter that he was, and outside of that, we stuck with our same game plan. Brucey was unbelievable tonight. He did everything for us. He sat down and defended for 44 minutes out there. He made some big shots for us, rebounded the ball, just an unbelievable effort on his part. You can't say enough about him. He'll get it done, and it doesn't matter if he gets one shot or eight shots. He's going to be in the same place at the same time. He's going to do the same thing. That's what defines our team, what he does. I think he's doing a little bit of both. I think he's starting with the approach that he's going to make the right pass, he's going to make the right play. I think they count on him enough that in crunch time he feels like he has to make plays. But whether it be the starting play of the game or at crunch time, we're doing the same thing. I think we changed one time towards the end there where we went at him on a double-team and they hit a three, and then we kind of went back. Everything else was the same, so we're going to make him make decisions, make him make shots over the top of us, and for a while there, as I said before, he did a good job of penetrating. He got a couple of great back doors, but we're going to make it as tough as possible for him. I think he's trying. I think he's definitely trying. We're a pretty good defensive team. We're not bad (laughter). We can stay in front of people and we can challenge shots, and we do pretty good with sticking with our game plan. It's worked so far, and we're not going to change a whole lot. Whether he tries to impose his will or not, we're going to be standing in front of him. You know, in my experience the Game 3 is usually the toughest game possible, and Game 4 brings a whole other challenge. It's a little bit of desperation, it's a little bit of laying it all on the line, and it's about really sustaining, because if you can sustain with people early on, they make runs, they use their energy, the crowd is behind them, and you can sustain over a half or three or four quarters, that's what it's all about. We're going to play that way. We're going to come out knowing that they're going to have their foot on the pedal and be pushing and LeBron is going to try to get to the rack and make plays and carry his team, and guys will be trying to make plays the same way. As I said, we're going to do the same exact thing. We're going to try to stay in the game and give ourselves a chance to win when it's crunch time. Tony has been unbelievable. He's been great. As you said, he's not really a three-point shooter (smiling), and I think the coach has said I had kind of a weird look on my face when he shot that third one. But it went down, and I'm happy about that. You know what, he's so confident right now, he's feeling so good about his jump shot. They've been allowing him to shoot the jump shot, trying to keep him out of the paint, and when you do that, you basically warm somebody up. They're able to step into shots, able to take shots, and I think they've done that for him. That was a huge shot for us to give us a bit of a cushion, and I probably was questioning it on the release, but I was happy with the results (laughter). Sure. As long as we get to four that's all that matters. It's a lot of pressure, especially in this situation with the Finals. But at the same time it's a lot of fun. It's playing on the biggest stage, it's playing the game that you love to play, and it's playing for the biggest prize. So it's a lot of fun. |
| Best shape I've been in in a long time. I just had some time off in the summer, and with no other responsibilities playing on any other teams, I was just able to kind of concentrate on getting strong, getting in shape. Then did my entire summer workout, like I had done in the past, I was able to get healthy and feel good coming into the season. Absolutely, yeah, of course. Defensively they were a lot better. They were physical. Z did an excellent job on the offensive glass, gave them a lot of second shots. But I thought we also did a pretty good job on the defensive end. I think it was just a better energy game for them, a better effort game for them more than anything else. No. No. We've got people that we consider shooters of the three and we're trying to get them off the three. We consider some people that we'll live with their jump shot, just like any other player on any other team. They are on my team Oh, absolutely, I'm very happy for Fin. Hopefully we can get this done. Obviously it's not won until it's won, but every year that we've won we've had some guys on the team that have been around the league, have been journeymen, have done it year after year and just unable to kind of get to this level, get this opportunity. My first year, Jerome Kersey was -- it was Tony Massenburg, a lot of different guys, Kevin Willis along the way. So every year you're really proud to have a person like that, a guy like that. Now it's Jacque and it's nice to have those guys in this situation, to be able to win a championship after being in this league for so many years and playing the game the right way for so many years, such good guys. It means a lot more to just add one and win one for them. Playoffs are always more physical, and they have been. We've played some very physical teams. The game changes in the playoffs. It takes a little while to get used to it. You get hit for a couple games and you get pushed around for a couple games, you're thinking, hey, these have got to be fouls, and then you realize I'm in the playoffs. It's not going to be officiated the same. People are going to get away with more. Once you turn the corner and come to that realization, that players are more physical and they are going to get the players to kind of decide what happens, it's a great atmosphere to play in. Veering away from what? Yeah, you have times, and it takes an entire season. It takes those 82 games to get things moving in the right direction. At the beginning of the year one of the points coach makes is we want to be better for more of those 48 minutes and do thing the right way for more of those 48 minutes than anyone else. It's progressive. At the beginning of the year we might have been doing it for a quarter or maybe for a half. Being in these playoffs we might have been doing it for three quarters and giving a quarter away, and I think we're doing it for more of those 48 minutes right now than we've done it all year long. As I say, we're kind of a step ahead of ourselves. We've got to get this one done, and of course we're focusing on that. It was an honor to even be thought of as that even coming into this season. To have won three championships and to have had the opportunity to have done that is an unbelievable thing. Coming into the league as a player, nothing is promised. You don't know what road your seasons in the NBA will bring. To have won three already, I feel blessed by that, and to have a team that has the ability to challenge for a playoff run, a playoff championship year in and year out, that's all you can ask for. He's put in a system and he's stuck with it. It's a lot of fun to play for someone that knows exactly what they want, and he's done just that. He changes a little bit every year. He tweaks some stuff every year, but the basis of what he does and the basis of what he coaches is the same. He preaches defense, of course. Over the years we've changed our offense bit by bit to use what's worked in years past. But all in all, you walk in every year and you understand what he's going to ask from you, what he's going to need from you and what players he's going to put around myself and the rest of the guys to be able to have a good team. And to have that is outstanding. That's an impossible question to ask. I don't know. They're headed in the right direction. I think Mike has them on the right track. He has them playing the right way. Of course they use a lot of our stuff. They play the way we play, and they have LeBron, they have a couple other guys who are going to be very good for a lot of years here. All I can say is they're moving in the right direction. I don't know if you can compare them to anyone. I think they're a bit of a different team. I hate to just keep saying LeBron, because LeBron is a different player than anything we've ever had, but it's a bit different but they're going in the right direction. I can't say it's night and day. I said this at the beginning of the series. This is the toughest road that we've had to a Finals. The three teams that we've played, obviously you could -- no disrespect to any of the first round, second round or third round teams, but you could have put them in any order but we could have played them in that round and had the same kind of tough series, tough opponent. Denver was unbelievable with the two scorers they had and the physicality they have; Phoenix, of course; Utah did one heck of a job and you know what they're going to bring to the table. And we made it through all three of those teams. I'd say we were prepared for just about anything. With the teams that we played, we were prepared for anyone. I've got to admit, this one is sweeter. The road that we took to get here, it was as tough as we ever had it. Guys persevered, had great performances from 1 to 12. It was great. All around it was great, probably the best one. Absolutely. That boy over there took my other trophy so I'm going to keep this one at my house. He carried the team, and I'm just happy he was on my team. It was our team defense. It was Bruce Bowen sitting down on him for 40-some odd minutes every night. It was our guys understanding that he wasn't able to do it himself. But I think it just starts with Bruce. I've got to give a lot of credit to Bruce. He did an awesome job of standing in front of that guy and making life tough for him. We understood as a group that we were going to have to do our part. They fought, they hit the offensive glass, they did everything they could, but we sustained. They made runs, we never panicked. I think it just shows a lot of the experience, the poise that we've built over the years, and I think we just outlasted them. We devise our own game game plan. We don't rely on anyone else. It's all us (laughter). You learn from everything. I think our coaches are the best in the business at watching game film, and we see these guys two times a year. Honestly we probably would have been more comfortable playing Detroit because we had played them more times before. We play Cleveland twice a year, and it's spread out and this year was so early in the year. We were different teams. We had to watch a lot of film, we had to figure out their tendencies, we had to figure out our game plan walking into this gym before we actually even had played these guys and know what they were about. Our coaching staff, give them a whole lot of credit at getting us prepared, getting us ready to play these guys. You know, it was a tough close-out. Guys like Mike Fin is what it's all about, to win a championship, to see how much he appreciates it, to see Jacque Vaughn and even Robert Horry, to see the looks on their face and the understanding of how special and how tough it is to get here, it makes it all worth it. Not that it's not worth it by itself, but those guys make it epitomize and define what it is about a journey to get here and how hard it is to get here. It made it sweeter, it really did. It would have been -- it would have been sweet either way, but it made it sweeter for them to make a run, for us to answer, for us to keep our composure and to find a way to win, no matter what. Those guys played great in that fourth quarter. They outscored us in the fourth quarter, as they did most of the series. We made plays, we found ways to get it done. I didn't play the greatest, people missed shots, they got offensive rebounds, they made plays. But we found a way to win. That's what this team is all about. No matter what happens we find ways to win. Manu is our X factor. Manu is the guy that when it all breaks down, when it all goes bad, when our offense isn't clicking the right way, he's the guy that makes plays. That's his role. That's his role, and this team is about roles. This team is about people filling their spots when they have to, and that is absolutely his role. He was great tonight in it. It was huge. It was a great time to do it. Our effort was there. They were the team who was being the aggressor on the glass, and they were the ones getting it done on the glass. And we had a stretch there where we got extra possessions. We found a way to get it done. As I was saying with the last question, we made plays and found a way to get it done when it wasn't there. That effort and that perseverance is what defines this team. We find a way to get it done when it's time to get it done. Such a broad question. Coach Pop is -- he's the one that puts us together. He's the guy that makes it run. He's the one that stays on us, no matter how well or how badly we're playing. He finds the right way to approach us. I can say no more than he defines the team. He always has, and as long as he's here, he always will. We're sticklers, I don't know. That's probably bad (laughter). We should appreciate and enjoy the win. To end the season 4-of-15 and 4-of-10 game is disappointing. In this situation it shouldn't be, but I think we're all competitors, and it defines us as competitors. We want to be the best players that we can be in the biggest situations. Honestly, I thought those other guys were great, and I thought I was sub-par. But we got it done, and that's all that matters. That's all that matters. |