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| We just tried to follow the game plan. Try not to foul and put teams on the free throw line because those are easy points and we just trust our game plan. We trust our, what we've been doing all throughout the course of this whole year. We have a lot of length out there with myself, AD, Dwight, KCP and Danny at the start of that third quarter, and we were able to get some deflections, get some turnovers and get out and do what we do best on the break.You know, just having that type of size and that athleticism helps tremendously. Well, yeah, we knew the first quarter definitely wasn't Laker basketball, Laker defense. We just had some break downs. We had some break downs, took a quarter for us to kind of figure it out. Not saying that we fully figured them out because it's too early in the series to say that but started to get a better feel and rhythm defensively and started to get some stops in the second quarter and build that lead up going into halftime. Pissed me off. That's my true answer. It pissed me off because out of 101 votes, I got 16 first-place votes. That's what pissed me off more than anything. You know, not saying that the winner wasn't deserving of the MVP. But that pissed me off. And I finished second a lot in my career, either from a championship, and now four times as an MVP. You know, like I said, I never came into this league to be MVP or to be a champion. I've always just wanted to get better and better every single day, and those things will take care of itself. But some things is just out of my hand and some things you can't control. But it pissed me off. No. I don't know. I'm not going to sit up here and talk about what the criteria should be or what it is. It's changed over the years since I've gotten into the league, I know that. You know, it's just changed. It's changed a lot. You know, sometimes it's the best player on the best team. Sometimes it's the guy with the best season statistically. Sometimes -- it's changed over the course -- over the course of my career. I mean, you don't know. You don't know. But you know, Giannis had a hell of a season, I can definitely say that. I mean, I'm fine. Don't get it twisted. I'm going back to my room. I'm perfectly fine. We're 1-0 in the Western Conference Finals. I'm absolutely fine. So don't -- like I was pissed off at the reaction earlier when I saw it. I'm absolutely great now. I'm going back to my room, drink some wine and sleep very well tonight. Let's not get it twisted. I'm great. It's just the voting scale is a little weird to me sometimes. I mean, it you take 2012. If you just stick with me -- or 2012-13, I had a chance to be Defensive Player of the Year and also MVP in the same season. And that year [Marc] Gasol was [voted] Defensive Player of the Year, but he made Second Team All-Defense, okay. So that doesn't make sense. It's like being MVP of the league but you make Second Team All-NBA. That's when I really started to look at things kind of like differently. I was like, how does that even make any sense. It's like being Rookie of the Year but you make Second Team All-Rookie. And then I looked at the Most Improved this year, and rightfully so Brandon Ingram was amazing and I thought he should have won it. But did you see the vote that Devonte' Graham got? He averaged four points last year compared to 17 and a half. If that's not improving, what is? And it's a weird thing sometimes that you just have -- I don't know how much we are really watching the game of basketball or are we just in the narration mode, the narrative. I don't even remember. I don't remember, actually. I don't know. I don't remember. I don't remember to be completely honest. It would be hard for me to answer that question. |
| Did you see my reaction? No, did you see my reaction after he made it? I tried to chase him down just like every last one of the teammates and staff that we had out there. Special moment for a special player. Happy to be a part of it. It's not about making a shot. It's about having a belief of just taking it, for one, and living with the result. I think right back to our game right before COVID hit. We played Brooklyn at home and he had a similar shot right on that left wing in front of their bench to win the game and he missed it. He was down on himself, but at the end of the day, I told him, if you're open, and I was able to drive that particular game and find him wide open and he just missed it. But it's just the confidence to take the shot. You're not going to make them all, but the belief to just take it and live with the results is what it's all about. Tonight was his moment. Tonight was his moment to find a space, hunt the ball down and one of our top 10 assists leaders, Rondo, found him and he knocked it down. A big-time play. No, it's not about an individual matchup. It's about us trying to execute and him just coming through for us. That's what he did. It wasn't, okay, your turn, my turn. It's about playing the game and trying to find ways to make an impact. Obviously, those two big shots that he had at the end, one was the floater to take the lead. Joker was able to get the tip-in, and he comes back in with the three. Just big-time plays, like I said, for a big-time player. I don't know. That's actually an AD question. Just happy to have him. I know what he brought to the table. I know what he's about. I know his skill set. That's why I wanted him here so badly. That's what this floor right here that we're all on right now is all about. It's the practices; it's the shootarounds. We talk about every single scenario possible: up three; down three; up two; down two; do we have a foul to give, do we not; do we have a timeout, do we not; are we going full-court; half-court; BOB, which is baseline out-of-bounds; SOB, sideline out-of-bounds. You talk about all those things. You want to be a championship club, you have to be able to do that on the fly. So knowing we didn't have a timeout, we were able to get into a situation to a set that we worked on in practice and get right to it. The first option, for me if Do [Rondo] saw me over the top, and if not, AD flashes. And the rest is history. When you are trying to play high-level basketball, you have to have high-level IQ players, and he's one of them. And not only does he have high-level IQ, but he also plays with high energy. We know what we're going to get out of him every night. It's not about him making shots. We know he's going to defend and he's going to play at a level that he's capable of playing at, and we all know that once he checks into the game every single night. We know what to expect out of him. To be honest, when he makes shots, it's extra credit for us. But he puts that work in on his offensive skill set to get better and better. We love everything about him. For sure. I know we're here playing the game, but I'm not losing the fact of what's important, as well. More than a vote, it's about protecting black voters and voter suppression that goes on in our communities. Like you said, change isn't made by sitting on the sidelines. That's one of our slogans and we're very proud of that. Getting the people that want to join us, getting them gear and wearing the T-shirt and wearing the hats and wearing the hoodies, because when they go in their community, that's something that they can continue to enlighten, continue to educate, continue to make people empowered about this movement. We always talk about change in our communities, and now we have an opportunity. We have an opportunity to really create change for the better and we look forward to this opportunity. To be completely honest, man, it was probably one of the greatest moments of my career up until that point. Just knowing the situation, we were about to go down 0-2 and we had home-court advantage. We knew how powerful that Orlando team was, playing against actually my teammate now in Dwight. So for me to be able to hit that shot was a huge moment for me. I was still a young kid at the time, so big-time. The one thing I wish AD had tonight with the shot that he made, I wish we were playing at Staples. We miss our fans so much and I can imagine in -- I probably would have blue the roof off Staples Center, AD hitting that shot with our crowd. I would have loved to have that moment -- I know what it felt like for me when I was able to hit that shot that you mentioned against Orlando, Game 2 of the Eastern Conference Finals at the buzzer. I think just staying even-keeled. That's what it's all about. The playoffs and the postseason, the more you advance into the postseason, the emotions and the adversity, it's going to be a roller coaster at times. No matter if you're up, no matter if you're down, being able to keep your composure and your mindset on the main thing is very important. This is the furthest he's gone in his career up to this point, and. I'm just happy to be here with him to give him any advice and lean on me. To be completely honest, in the second half, I leaned on him, and he brought us home. So I just tried to set the example early on, and we leaned on him, especially in the fourth quarter, and he brought us home. I don't know. I think for me, it's always been about the man in the arena, the quote from Theodore Roosevelt. It's about the guy that's in the arena that's gone through everything -- the blood, the sweat, the tears and, in our situation, the competition. I's about the work that you put in and the belief in yourself. It's not about the doubters or the naysayers or the people who are going to try to talk to you and slander you and bring you down every single day. It's not about them because they have never been in the arena. They don't understand. AD, he knows how special he is and when he doesn't, I'll be the first one to tell him how special he is. He wanted to be here. I'm happy he wanted to be here, because if he didn't, we wouldn't have a moment like tonight. That's what it's all about. You put that pressure on yourself when you don't really care what other people think, because what other people think doesn't really matter because they don't understand. Anybody can talk from outside, but if they got into the ring or they got into the arena, probably 10 times out of 10, they [expletive] their pants. |
| I think it was the same in Game 2, same thing that we were able to get by with AD's shot, turned the ball over too much. We couldn't get to the free throw line, and you know, I give credit where credit is due, though. Denver came in and played exceptionally well. They played better than us, more aggressive than us through three quarters, 36 minutes, but you know, we've got into the penalty in the third quarter with like nine and a half minutes to go and we had some turnovers that led to some easy buckets for them. We had 16 turnovers for 25 points and put them to the line 29 times. It's not going to be winning ingredients for us if we continue to do that and we knew that, even after Game 2, we talked about that, trying to assure that. Got to be better than that Game 4. I think offensively we were very good. At times, we weren't. I think we just got to do a better job, like Coach was saying, of getting to the paint and once the defense collapses, just finding our guys weak side; if it's a guy that's slashing, through a weak side to the paint or if it's a guy that's spotted up on our side off one of our bigs, getting behind the defense for a lob. So Denver has been a pretty good defensive team all year. We understand that. I'm looking forward to seeing our film -- our film session tomorrow and continue to get better. I think it's a bit of both. I think we played with a lot more energy, and we understand we had 12 minutes left to try to make a game out of it and we were able to do that. We were able to switch some things up defensively, going zone here, man here, trying to keep them off balance. When you dig yourself a hole like that, every shot that they make and every shot that we miss, feels like the game is collapsing. So you know, we played some pretty good ball in the fourth quarter, but those first 36 minutes, that hurt us obviously. I've never in my 35 years ever condoned violence. Never have. But I also know what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong and I grew up in an inner city in a black community, in what we call the "hood," the "ghetto," however you want to picture it. And I've seen a lot of counts, firsthand, of a lot of black people being, you know, I guess racially profiled because of our color, and I've seen it, you know, throughout my whole life. You know, and I'm not saying that all cops are bad, because I actually throughout high school and things of that nature, I'm around them all the time and they are not all bad. But when you see the videos that's going on and you can see not only my hometown but all over America, you continue to see the acts of violence towards my kind, I can't do nothing but to speak about it and see the common denominator. But not one time have I ever said, you know, let's act violent towards cops. I just said that what's going on in our community is not okay, and we fear for that and we fear for our lives. It's something that we go on every single day as a black man and a black woman and a black kid and a black girl, we fear; we fear that moment where we are pulled over or -- I just seen something, I believe yesterday or the day before, of a guy in Wisconsin was renting a house, and the next door neighbor called the police on him, and the police came in the house without a warrant, without anything, and arrested the guy, a black man because he was sitting out on the porch, and if you can't tell me that's not racial profiling, then I don't know what the hell -- or what the hell we are looking at. But I do not condone violence towards anyone, police, black people, white people, anyone of color, anyone not of color, because that's not going to ever make this world or America what we want it to be. So -- and I have zero comment on the sheriff. It's some of the risk passes that we're making, including myself. I mean, I had five turnovers in the first half and one in the second half, so I understood what I was doing in the first half and made an adjustment. There are some passes that we have been able to complete throughout this season, but versus Denver we have to be a little bit more careful and make more -- more sound plays with the ball, and protect the ball, because like we always preach, every possession is very important. When you give up 25 points off 16 turnovers, that's not good. We did the same thing in Game 2, we had 24 turnovers and luckily it didn't bite us in the butt but it should have. We just got to do a better job of that and it's a conscious effort that not only starts with me because I'm the point guard of the team, and it trickles down to everyone else. I was just setting a screen and his elbow got high and was able to strike me -- strike me across the jaw. I don't -- I don't care about flagrant ones or flagrant twos. I don't want him to come out of the game. I like the competition. I don't think it was blatant but I don't know mindset, but I don't think he did it on purpose. I was okay with it. You know, went down for a little bit. Got back up and was ready to play. I was cool with the ruling. I was okay with them saying a flagrant one. I ain't here to fight. |
| I knew it was winning time, and Jamal had it going. The kid is special. He has an array of shots. Triple threat from the three, mid-range and also in the paint. For me, it's just trusting my defensive keys. Trusting my study of film. Trusting personnel. And living with the results. I told my teammate that I had him and everyone else can kind of stay at bay and stay home. I was able to get a couple stops and we were able to rebound the basketball, which is the most important thing. I think at times we're doing a great job. At certain times, we can do a better job with our spacing, especially on our post-ups. They are doing a little doubling on the post at times, so we've got to get a better outlet for AD when he is posting up and get the ball swung-swung as quickly as possible to get more looks. I thought we did a really good job, more importantly, tonight of not turning the ball over. The thing we talked about in Game 2 and Game 3 is we cannot turn the ball over against this team. We did a great job of that tonight. Not for me. I don't reserve any energy. I'm on the floor, I give it all I got. If I need a break, I ask for a break. Coach has done a good job of getting me out throughout the course of the game. I don't look at it as a reserve tank. I've got pretty good energy when I'm on the floor all the time. It's winning time and I don't have a chance or time to be feeling tired. I'm tired now. That's when I'm tired, when it's zeros on the clock. That's when I'm tired. I'm not tired during the game. It's just about playing to our capability. Coming out with the game plan and executing it for 48 minutes. If we do that, we give ourselves a good chance to win. Dwight was a beast. Gave us opportunities when we missed shots, which as a team, we missed a couple. AD didn't miss any, but as a team, when we missed a couple shots, he was cleaning glass both offensively and defensively. Got us put-backs and was able to control the paint. We know we got smashed in the rebounding category in Game 3, so we wanted to do a better job in that. Dwight brought that physical presence. It was great for our ballclub. Tonight, late game, Do [Rajon Rondo] was running pick-and-rolls. I was able to run a couple. But we just made our free throws. We made our free throws down the stretch, and that's what closes games out. You've got to get your stops defensively, make your free throws when you're fouled. And I thought we did that. See how low his brow is. If his brow is really low, then you know not to talk to him. If it's higher, then he's accepted the fact that you're allowed to come into his office and talk to him. Yesterday his brow was very low in this part and no one talked to him. So we already knew the mindset he was in, and he came out and did it. I think at the end of the day, respect. You just look at the history of America and the disrespect that Black women have gotten for the last 400 years. You can't turn a blind eye to that. When I look at my household and see my daughter, who is five on her way to six, my wife and my mom, rest in peace my grandmother, so many Black women have done so many things for me. Seeing the sacrifices they made, especially my mom when I was growing up. They were disrespected along the way and it's still like that today. In the case of Breonna Taylor's case, it's just shown once again that the walls of the neighbor is more important than her life. So not only did I want to acknowledge all the queens in this world, all the Black queens in this world, but the ones in my life, the personal ones, too. I just kind of had a moment yesterday. I mean, I have a lot of moments, but felt like it was important to let Black women know that you're not alone. No matter the disrespect or what they may feel, don't stop. Because that's exactly what they want you guys to do. They want you guys to stop. They want you guys not to be as powerful as you guys are, not as strong as you guys are, as determined as you guys are. They want you all to be at bay. They want you to accept what's going on. For sure, I won't allow that. When they are feeling down or feeling like there's no journey for them or gateway to be heard or to be seen or be respected or be accepted, my job is to continue to let them know that they are. They are important to everything that goes on, not only in America but in the world. Everything that goes on for 24 hours in day, 365 days a year, 366 in a leap year. That's what it's about. We didn't talk about that. One thing, we wanted to be there for our brother, Do. As much as it's devastating to us, you can only imagine it happening in your backyard. Do being from Louisville, we knew how tough it had to be on his family and the locals there. No, we didn't discuss that one bit. But can't say that we were surprised at the verdict. None of us are surprised at it. That's what's more devastating, that none of us were surprised at what the outcome was. Do has been in a lot of playoff games. He's won a championship. He's played at the highest level, and he's someone that we can trust. In the postseason, every possession is so important. When you can have guys that have been in the moments and can understand and also be able to make adjustments on the fly, and know that you can count on them down the stretch, it just makes the team and you individually feel so much more confident in the outcome. Do has been, ever since he got back from injury and we saw this playoff run, he's been exceptional. Thank you. Reminded me. I think the best thing is that we have been together. We're able to see what's going on and be able to bounce things off one another and to be there for one another. This game is so much bigger than just us getting on the floor and running around and calling out screens and running plays and making mistakes and trying to figure out how we can be better the next time. There's also a big thing called life that's involved in this, too. And to have, like you said, things that happened in Kenosha, and the Breonna Taylor case and so many other things that are going on in America, as we speak and as we move forward, being around people that you can trust and confide in, be able to talk to, bounce things off and not feel that you have to tackle it by yourself, I think that's very important when you have a support system like that. The best thing that you can have is a close-knit group, because we're together more than we are with our families. So having that support is pretty amazing. |
| Yeah, just, one, getting my breath back underneath me after a hard-fought series against one of most well-coached team I've ever played against in the postseason, one of the most respected teams I've played against. Obviously, you guys know how much I love Mike Malone. He's incredible. He's the reason why that team is so damn good. So I was thinking about that. I was also thinking about some of my teammates who this is their first appearance to the Finals. Obviously, AD had a lot on my thought process. This is the reason why I wanted to be a teammate of his and why I brought him here. I wanted him to see things that he had not seen before in this league. To be able to come through for him meant a lot for me personally. Then I started thinking about the next opponent. Boston had a few moments in my head. Miami had a few moments in my head as well. How challenging that's going to be, whoever wins that series. Then I just started thinking about my journey as well. All that was just going through my mind as the confetti was on the floor, was coming down, landing on my shoulder and things of that nature. So hopefully that was a good description. For me personally, the job is not done. But it's great to hit moments throughout the course of a journey and appreciate that. This is all part of the process, but the job is not done for me personally. For us as a franchise, I'm extremely proud to be a part of this franchise getting back to where it belongs, and that's playing for championships and competing for championships and representing the Western Conference in the championships. This is what I came here for. I heard all the conversations and everything that was said about why did I decide to come to L.A -- the reason I came to L.A., it was not about basketball. All those conversations, just naysayers and things of that nature. I understood that, with the season I had last year and my injury, it just gave them more sticks and more wood to throw in the fire to continue to say the things that they would say about me. But it never stopped my journey and never stopped my mindset and never stopped my goals. I'm happy, like I said, and proud of this organization and proud of my teammates and I'm proud of the coaching staff, the front office and our ownership as well at this very moment today. I mean, every time you put on purple and gold, you think about his legacy. You think about him and about what he meant to this franchise for 20-plus years, and what he stood for both on the floor and off the floor. What he demanded out of his teammates and what he demanded out of himself. We have some similarities in that sense. Our games are different, but as far as our mindset and our drive to want to be the best and our drive to not lose -- sometimes you're going to lose games, but that drive to always want to be victorious, it stops you from sleeping. And sometimes you put certain things -- you sacrifice a lot of things. You sacrifice your family at times because you're so driven to be so great that other things fall by the wayside at times. So I understand that. I'm one of the few that can understand the mindset that he played with and the journey from high school to the NBA. It's just a thing that I carry with me, like I said, every time I decide at one point in that locker room before the game when I throw that jersey on. I don't, unfortunately. I wish I did. They happen so fast and my mind is still so locked in on the journey that it's hard for me to take in and appreciate what we just accomplished. Just how I've always been. I always say that when I'm done playing the game, hopefully I look back on it and enjoy it -- and hopefully I will. Hopefully I can, because I don't think I enjoy it enough when I'm in it because I'm so engulfed in the process until the final call. But I'm so damn proud of this team and where we are right now up until this day. I don't know, I've never looked at it that way. I've never said, OK, I want to cast myself as a superstar or whatever the case may be. I just want to travel my own journey, because it is my journey. I've appreciated everything that's happened along the way. I mean, throughout -- the ups, the downs, the ups on the court, the downs on the court, the wins and losses. But I've been able to, I guess as Frank Sinatra would say, I did it my way. At the end of the day and at the end of my career, I just hope that I inspire enough people to want to play the game the right way, and have that respect from all the opponents that I played against, all the teams that I played against and the organizations that I play for. Because at the end of the day, I mean, that's all you have, is your respect. Well, it all depends what game you were talking about. There were a couple games where I was at home. There was one or two games where I was in Cabo and a couple games where I was at a hookah lounge during the Finals last year. That's the truth. I wasn't smoking hookah, but I was there. Absolutely. I wouldn't have went. The game was on in Cabo, the game was on in my house and at the hookah lounge. I watched every single minute of the games until they stopped. I actually watched every single postseason game last year. I think I told David that; I watched every single postseason game. Part of me, I'm just a fan of the game. I love the sport. I love the competitive nature. I love the playoffs. And then, also, of saying like, oh, I wish I was in this moment, what would I have done at that moment? What play would I have made in that moment if I was out there? So yes, I didn't miss a game. I didn't miss one game. Even on vacation, I didn't miss a game. My wife didn't like it, but she'll be OK. I've always had the mindset that in a close-out game for me personally, I'm just as desperate as the team that we are trying to close out. I don't want to play another game. And if we are in a position where we can win that game, that's just my mindset. Does it always go that route? No, because I don't believe I'm undefeated. I'm not undefeated in close-out games. My mindset is that I do not -- if we have played well enough and we are in the fourth quarter and we have a chance to win, I do not want to play another game. I mean, I love the game, but I do not want to play another game. That's always been my mindset. I want to be just as desperate as my opponent, just as desperate as the other team, the player that I'm lined up against, the coaching staff that's on the other side. It's just who I am. It's just a mindset I'm able to link into at that very moment. I guess it was a very, very, very, very long time ago, when I was 27, like a long-ass time ago when I was 27 in this league. I just wanted to put myself kind of in his position. Sometimes what I would be thinking at that age and if I was with someone in the later stage of their career, I just don't want to let them down. And I'm not even talking on the floor, because there's things that sometimes they go in, they don't go in. But as far as, I don't want to say a role model, but someone that holds myself to a higher standard as far as character. I don't want to let them down. And then, it's funny because it's kind of rubbed off on me as well because he doesn't want to let me down. I don't know, you've seen the movie Step Brothers before, right? Well, there it is. Yeah, I'm Will Ferrell, for sure. I get on his nerves a lot, for sure. I go in and mess with his drums and he's not watching -- yeah, that's me. I get on his nerves a lot. I think Alex Caruso is a true definition of when opportunity meets preparation. He's been preparing for this moment for a long time and he just needed opportunity. Luke [Walton] gave him an opportunity last year, and now Coach Vogel and our coaching staff are giving him an opportunity on a bigger stage. He's just taking full advantage of that and just full stride. He's just gotten better and better every single minute he's on the floor. He's still learning. Every game is still a learning experience for him because he's so new to the NBA. He played a lot of his minutes over the course of his early stages in the G League. But first time I saw him, and seeing him in some of our practices, it wasn't the sneaky athleticism. It was the way that he defended and how cerebral he played the game. I gravitate toward players like that right away, because the game, everybody talks about the physical side and how high you can jump and how fast you can run and all those things. But the mental side is what gets you to the next level. You know, I saw that from A.C. and he continues to learn. He's just been great for us. He's been great. He's been unbelievable. I mean, we've faced, it's been a crazy obstacle course for our franchise this whole year. I'm not going to sit here and give all the details, but you guys, everyone can go back and just see from the start of the season all the way up until now what we've gone through as a team. He's been able to manage it the whole time. Bringing in guys, losing guys. He's just always been the anchor, and our coaching staff has been right behind him. I can't say anything more than that. Just happy to be on the floor to kind of be his coach on the floor and just command to my teammates the same message that he's given to me and be an extension of his mind. It's been great. One, I've taken care of my body. I've been available to my teammates. That's one. I sleep. I try to get as much sleep as I can. I think there's no better recovery than sleep. And then I've never cheated the game as well. I've put so much work into my craft, so much work into the game. I think you add on to the fact that I've played with some great teammates and some great coaching staffs, from T-Lue and his coaching staff to Erik Spoelstra and his coaching staff, and now this coaching staff with Frank Vogel. I'm blessed. I'm truly blessed. They have all allowed me to be me. They have allowed me to go out and do the things that I do on the floor. Use my mind, my play and be able to command my teammates the way I do. It's put me in position to be able to, like you said, be in the Finals nine out of 10 years. To answer your second question, everything is different. It's 2020. Nothing feels the same. Everything is different. So the ceremony is different. The one thing I can say, I wish we were in Staples Center tonight with our fans, with our Laker faithful, because they deserve this as much as we do because they went through the last so many years of not being in a postseason run, feeling like their franchise would never get back to this moment. But they continued to stay faithful. It would have been great to celebrate with them tonight. So hopefully we can continue to give them something to smile about in the next round, as well. That's what our mindset is. |