

NBA Finals: Bucks vs. Suns

Tuesday, July 6, 2021

Mike Budenholzer

Milwaukee Bucks

Game 1: Postgame

Phoenix Suns 118, Milwaukee Bucks 105

Q. Giannis moves from doubtful to questionable to starting, so what did you see leading up to the game to make that decision? It looked like early he wanted to establish himself and prove he was good to go.

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: Yeah, he had a good workout before the game. I think you've got to listen to Giannis first. He felt good. The Sports Performance Group felt good, he had been checking boxes the last couple days and making progress and so he was cleared, and he wanted to go and everybody was on the same page. So, you know, it's just a credit to him. And we talked, just the work he puts in, the work the Sports Performance Group puts in, for him to be back playing in Game 1, it's really impressive what he did.

Q. You guys had started the game switching and did it again in the third quarter, and it felt like Chris got into a rhythm in the third quarter against the switch. Just what did you like about that look and then maybe what did you not like about it as much in the third?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: So yeah, he's a good player. Their pick-and-roll game is tough to guard. I think we have to just keep getting better. We have to keep looking at the film and see how we can maybe take away some of the rhythm, or make it where he's not getting into his spots as easily. That will be a big part of looking between Game 1 and Game 2.

Q. I know you said it was impressive that Giannis came back and was able to play. How do you assess his performance? What did you see from him that you liked and how much did you notice that he was coming off an injury?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: I think there were a lot of good things, considering five days and what he's been through these last five, six, seven days. I think 17 rebounds, 20 points, some great play-making, passing, defending the rim, he's just like everybody else. I'm sure we'll find some things where he could be better.



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I think it usually takes him playing -- he's a rhythm guy. So, I'm excited about how he'll improve from Game 1 to Game 2. We'll see how he feels. But I think play-wise, he always gets better when he plays.

Q. I guess speaking about it, did he have a number that he could get to tonight? You could only play however many minutes or something like that? And you used him at the five late, was that something you were a little bit worried about with his condition and getting back for the first game?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: We mapped him out a plan, like we really do pretty much every game, but considering his situation, and then there's just feedback during the game, if we can adjust and what we can do and how he's feeling. You know, so I think him playing 35, 35-plus minutes, everybody was kind of communicating and getting to that point.

And then him playing at the five has been something that's been good for us in stretches, and so we'll look at it. Hopefully we'll look and see if we can get our best combos out there. Sometimes each night it changes.

Q. Jrue Holiday had said that when Giannis doesn't play, he feels the need to step up and be aggressive specifically to make up for that. How did you see him trying to find his way a little bit tonight? Where do you think he can find it better moving forward?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: Yeah, you know, it's always a balance for Jrue, not just Giannis; he likes to set his teammates up. He likes to get everybody involved.

So, I think it's partly on me. I've got to make sure he's getting in situations and spots where he can be aggressive. I think he'll be better going into the second game.

Q. What advice do you have for Giannis when you've got to not only try to make free throws but you've got the whole crowd on you while you're trying to do it?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: My advice to him is always get there, get to the free throw line, keep attacking. The more he does something, the better he gets at it. I thought he shot the free throw as far as the eye and the way it came



off his hand and the way it looked, I think he's in a good place at the free throw line.

Q. With Giannis, I noticed on the first offensive play, you guys, I don't know if it was on purpose, but ran that lob play to him. Were you wanting to see how he felt right away or did it work out that way that that's what you ran?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: Yeah, it was one of the options. There's kind of multiple options, lots of types when we do things. I definitely would not say we knew that he was going to have to go and jump and do that. But he was cleared. He's done some things, and he felt really confident. We felt really confident. I don't think you want to put him out there if you don't trust him to go play and trust his instincts.

But it wasn't a conscientious [decision], to see what he could do on that first play.

Q. You have dropped a couple Game 1s now in a row, and we've talked to Jrue about getting better as the series goes on. What do you feel like you take from this game to move forward with?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: I think that's a big message. We can get better. It's something we live by. It's one of our mantras, just keep getting better. I'm sure both teams are going to look at the film and be talking about that.

But I think this group's embraced that on a day-to-day basis. So, when you lose a Game 1 or you lose a game, I think it's a good place to go mentally is just look, just evaluate and see where we can get better.

Q. What went wrong? What do you think is the biggest mistake you guys made?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: You know, I think they executed well offensively. You know, I think can we be better defensively, make things a little more difficult. I think that's the thing. And I think their transition, maybe more so in the first half, the transition, felt like it hurt us. You know, they got some clean, good looks at threes.

So, it's like most games. You've got to be good in transition. You've got to be able to guard in the half-court and rebound. We've got to be able to do all that better.

Q. Just knowing that you guys only had a couple of days, long travel schedule, do you feel like that factored into the slow start from your team tonight?

MIKE BUDENHOLZER: Not really. You know, I think we

played on Saturday. Now it's Tuesday. We've had a couple days. But everything adds up.

But I don't think the travel or the timing or anything; if we played well and won, we'd have talked about we're in a good rhythm and things like that. I don't think you can flip it and use that as, you know -- and really, the first quarter, I thought we were good, at halftime; there was just a stretch in the third quarter where we've just got to be better.

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