

Team LeBron Postgame NBA All-Star Game 2020

Monday February 17, 2020

Kawhi Leonard

Team LeBron 157 - Team Giannis 155

Q. Kawhi, congratulations on the win and the MVP. A lot of people seem to feel as if this format is good for the game, but some are saying the game maybe shouldn't end on a free throw. I'm curious as to what you think about that.

KAWHI LEONARD: I mean, it's a point, so we can't take out free throws through the whole game. They pretty much made the last six or seven free throws towards the end. They kept giving them. So do we want to minus those points as well?

But the new format was good. I felt like it was fun in that fourth quarter.

Q. Did you enter the game with the -- I guess, did you want to win the trophy? And did it being renamed after Kobe make you want it more than maybe before?

KAWHI LEONARD: No. Winning it is a plus. I didn't come in the game saying, I'm going to take that trophy home. I think I came in and made my first two shots and kept shooting and made shots. That's when I told myself I'm going to go try to get it.

Q. Was taking a lot of threes to begin with was your mindset coming into this game, or was it just what the defense gave you?

KAWHI LEONARD: Frank just drew up a good play to start the game. And Bron with his vision, he'd seen me open and passed me the ball, and I knocked down a shot, and it pretty much went on from there. Like I said, I made the first two. It felt good and kept rolling with it and ended up knocking some more down.

Q. You've won Finals MVP and now you win All-Star MVP. Could you see yourself ever gunning for regular season MVP?

KAWHI LEONARD: Yeah, I mean, my mindset is always just to try to make my team the best team at the end of the season, and if I'm fortunate enough to win a regular season MVP, then I'll be happy with it. I always just want to win championships. I'm not really concerned with the personal goal. So I always just want to play on an MVP level so my team can win.

Q. How special is it that you won the first Kobe Bryant MVP Award? I know you mentioned you

dedicated this to Kobe.

KAWHI LEONARD: It's very special. Like I said, I had a relationship with him. Words can't explain how happy I am for it. Able to put that trophy in my room, in my trophy room, and just be able to see Kobe's name on there, it just means a lot to me. He's a big inspiration in my life. He did a lot for me.

Q. Kawhi, you mentioned during your speech after you got the MVP award, you were saying that you did this for Kobe. Are you going to be carrying the same mentality going into the playoff and The Finals hopefully?

KAWHI LEONARD: I pretty much carry that every year, you know what I mean? I'm going to play hard. That's what I do. I want to go in and win every game. Whatever happens happens from there. I would dedicate anything to him.

Q. Winning this award, how does this bring momentum to finishing the second half strong?

KAWHI LEONARD: I don't think it really does, you know what I mean? It's totally different. A bunch of All-Stars coming together is a different game, different teammates, different coaches. So it's just back to our grind now, the regular season grind, and hopefully everybody can stay healthy on our team and we can make a push.

Q. Kawhi, this summer you could have come play for the Lakers and play for Frank and with LeBron and A.D. What was it like tonight working with those guys and getting the other side of the experience?

KAWHI LEONARD: It was fun. I played with Bron and A.D. last year, and I think the year before that or so. But it's always fun just to get around guys that are very competitive, see what they do on an everyday basis. Just talking, just being their teammate. We go at each other all year round, and just, like I said, it's great to be able to pick their brain and just be around them and joke and laugh.

