

NBA Finals: Bucks vs. Suns

Tuesday, July 6, 2021

Giannis Antetokounmpo

Milwaukee Bucks

Game 1: Postgame

Phoenix Suns 118, Milwaukee Bucks 105

Q. A couple for you. Can you take me through the last week and what this was like to get back to this place?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It was tough. You know, obviously I had to do my best to get back. I had to do my best to get back. Listen to my medical staff. I did the right treatment. Took care of my body and supported my teammates, and now I'm back.

Q. Just how did it feel tonight, and specifically, I wanted to ask you in the third quarter, there's a spot where Jae Crowder pulls back on a three and looked like you grabbed at your knee a little after that. What were you going through in that moment and overall, what did it feel like?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It's okay. You know, obviously not trying to make it about me, but felt great. You know, the medical staff cleared me to play, and you know, out there I had my balance. Thought my knee was stable. Did not feel pain. So I felt good.

Q. On that play, how did it feel?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I know what you're talking about. I felt good.

Q. I know that you had just told Eric that you had lots of discussions throughout the week, but what was the rehab process? Was it grueling? Was it time-consuming? How many hours were you spending a day trying to get that knee ready?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: 24. 24. You know, from my treatment to lifting and getting on the court, pool sessions, keeping my foot elevated, like 24 hours a day. And obviously it wasn't easy but I was willing to do it, and the medical staff had a great program for me that I was able to do what I had to do to stay in shape and at the same time recover and not have a lot of swelling in my knee.



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And you know, obviously declared me to play. I felt good. My knee, definitely no pain. The swelling was down. I was like, okay, good to go.

Q. I don't think we believe you about the pain thing, but I wondered if you --

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Why?

Q. Because you're just -- we know you. But it's okay. I understand. But I wondered if you saw the video of your injury?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: No.

Q. No. It makes sense. And the wrap that you had, did it hinder your range of motion? You were pretty wrapped up on the knee.

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: No, I'm trying my best to not make it about my knee but I'm going to say one more time that my knee felt good. Obviously when you go and play a game, you never know what's going to happen. The play with Jae Crowder, it might happen or the same play that happened; you don't know what's going to happen.

I'm just happy I'm out there and I'm able to help my teammates in any way possible and participate in the NBA Finals, in my first NBA Finals.

So, I just try to put my attention on that and not, you know, if my knee hurts, if I feel -- you know, at the end of the day, I'm out there. I felt good. I don't feel pain. I can run. I can jump. I can set screens. I can rebound the ball. I can do stuff.

So, I'm good. I'm happy. I'm happy that I'm out there, and you know, at the end of the day, I haven't watched the clip, but when the play happened, I thought I'm going to be out for a year, you know. I'm just happy that two games later, I'm back.

Q. This trend of them chanting towards you when you're at the line has not come to an end. Is it bothersome? Do you hear it? At this point, what do you even think about it?



GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: No, it hasn't come to an end, and I think it's something that's going to follow me for the rest of my career. So, I've just got to embrace it and have fun with it.

But at the end of the day I'm just focusing on my routine, my technique, my body, and as I said, it's not going to stop, so I just have to learn to live with it.

Q. Do you hear it? Do you notice it?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Of course, 20,000 people yelling, "one, two, three, four," you notice that.

But as I said, like I've learned to embrace it. Like I know it's not going to stop. You know, at the end of the day when it keeps going, like it fades away. You know, there's times that the first free throw I hear it but the fifth one, sixth one, I'm not hearing no more and I'm just focusing on what I've got to do and my routine.

Q. This is weird, going from back to front, front to back, but we didn't get to hear what you, what was it like to watch your team clinch the Eastern Conference Finals and then to hold that trophy?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It was big. You know, obviously, I would have loved to be out there with them, but you know, they held it down, they played great basketball. They played together. They competed hard defensively. I was extremely happy for them.

Q. Did it hurt, like your heart at all, that you couldn't be out there?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: No. I'm participating right now, so that's in the past. You know, everything happens for a reason in life. God always puts you in the position you're supposed to be put in and that's what I believe.

So, I'm just happy, man. I went down, I thought I'm going to be out for the year. I thought I'm gone. I thought I'd turn -- I'd hurt everything in my knee. Just being able to be on the bench and not be on a cold table getting surgery and supporting those guys, watching the game and walking around and sharing with them.

Obviously, my competitive side will want to play, but at the end of the day you've always got to find the positive things in everything that you go through in order for to you move forward.

You know, I'm happy that they were able to get the job done. They played great. They played together. I was extremely proud for the team and I'm happy that I have the

opportunity to be out there with them again and finish what we started.

Q. You mentioned a few times you thought you might be out for a year. When did you know it wasn't as serious as you thought? Looking ahead to Game 2, you have two days off, you say you feel pretty good. Do you feel like Game 2, the momentum keeps going for you physically?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: For sure. Hopefully -- I can't predict the future. Hopefully I feel better and as we move forward I feel better, and as a team we can get one out of Phoenix.

But as I said, I can't predict the future. I might wake up tomorrow and my knee might be swelled up. Hopefully I wake up tomorrow and I'm good; hopefully I wake up two days from now and I'm good, and hopefully we can go out there and compete.

Q. How long did you think the worst about the knee?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I probably say until the next day, I couldn't walk probably, and my knee was like double the size. Usually I never swell up. But you know, I woke up the next day, did whatever it's called, MRI or X-ray, I don't know what it's called and they said I'm good. And I was like, "Thank God."

But at the end of the day, it's like all the medical staff and the strength and conditioning team, they have done a great job throughout the year to like keep me healthy, and all the work we've put in, that's why it wasn't as bad, you know, because of all the work I've put in throughout the years, I'm happy.

Yeah, I'm not trying to make it about me, and hopefully in Game 2, I'll feel better.

Q. You're playing in the NBA Finals. This is something that you have said for years, "I want to bring a championship to Milwaukee." It's why you re-signed here. What's the feeling for you as you went out there and competed?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: It felt good. It felt good. Just wearing the jacket and seeing the Finals logo on the jacket and the jersey; obviously, we didn't get the win, but it's good to be here. It's good to enjoy the moment, enjoy the games. You can never take things like this for granted and just try to make the best out of it. But I'm happy that we're able to be here. We worked hard all year to have an opportunity to win a championship, and we're going to keep working hard day-by-day and put ourselves in a position to

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

win.

Q. And secondly, considering how much work over the last couple days has been about your knee, now that you're able to obviously continue to get treatment, but to turn your focus to, okay, basketball, this is what I need to adjust to be better in Game 2, what's that process like for you?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I haven't watched the tape yet, the clips. Got to sit down and watch the tapes with the coaching staff and see what I can do better, what the team can do better, and we'll see.

But right now, I don't know. But I just hope physically I feel better, mentally I feel good, and I try to figure it out.

Q. I know this is probably not how you dreamt your first NBA Finals appearance to be, coming in with a knee injury and losing Game 1. But the statement that you made over the last week to your teammates, to yourself, what do you feel like you may have proved to get to this point and be able to contend in the NBA Finals?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: I didn't prove nothing. I feel like I have nothing to prove to anybody. I just try to do my job and try to enjoy the process of playing a basketball game and being in the NBA Finals. I feel like we all are extremely pleased. We have a great team. I've said in the past we work hard all year long to be in this position. Like, we have to like live in the moment and try to take as much as possible from this experience. Because like you can never take moments like this for granted.

But yeah, I didn't have to prove nothing to my teammates. My teammates know who I am, what kind of person I am on the court, off the court. You know, try not to let them down. But they know if I'm physically capable to play, I'm going to play. They know if I can help them in any way, they know I'm going to try to help them in any way. They know who I am.

But the message to the team is that we are in the NBA Finals and enjoy the experience, and now wasn't able to get Game 1 but we have to focus and get Game 2.

Q. Going into the series, you know Chris Paul and Booker are good in the mid-range; how do you improve on that going forward?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: Just got to keep making it tough on them, tough as possible. They are going to get a lot of shots to go. Great playmakers. Most of the time, they are going to make the right decision. The ball is going

to be in their hands a lot. Just have to make it as tough as possible. Keep them in front. Make them shoot twos, but tough twos. And obviously, we know that's what they want to get to.

But at the end of the day, they are great players. Like all you can do is contain them as much as possible. Maybe we have to pick them up full court, I don't know. We've got to go watch the tape and see what we can do better as a team and hopefully we can make adjustments from Game 1 to Game 2 and just make it more tough for them.

Q. Last one on the free throws. I feel like with you it matters when you get the ball from the official, you need to drop your shoulders, take your breath and also take that simulated shot and then get the ball from the official. Sometimes that routine for you is messed up. Did you say anything to anybody or have you asked? Am I right on that? Or has the timing been better since Brooklyn?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: No. I just try to do my routine. And part of my routine is breathing and catching my breath. But yeah, I'm not saying nothing to nobody. Like, who should I say something to? The referee? Why don't you pass me a second early, like I wanted the ball? That's not who I am. That's not me. I focus on what I've got to do. I focus on myself. I focus on the task. And if he gives me the ball one second earlier, I've just got to adjust and find a solution, how can I make the free throw. That's pretty much it.

Q. You said you're somebody who believes everything has happened in your life for a reason. How has this team's experiences, being up 2-0 against Toronto and everything you guys had to deal with last year in the bubble, how have those experiences shaped this team this postseason, especially when you guys have been down in the series?

GIANNIS ANTETOKOUNMPO: You know, try not to focus on the past much. Trying to learn from it and keep moving forward. But at the end of the day, we were up 2-0 with Toronto and we didn't win the series -- yeah, we were up two.

But at the end of the day in order for you to keep getting better, you have to face some adversity. In the previous series, we were up 2-0 with Miami and were able to close out the series and we were down 2-0 and we were able to come back and then we lost the first game against Atlanta and we were able to find a way. We just have to keep finding a way. At the end of the day we take it one day at a time, one game at a time, you know, day at a time, possession at a time, game at a time and just try to figure

out ways to put ourselves in a position to win.

But try not to focus on the past as much because it's in the past. I learn from it. Hopefully from the series up 2-0, and when the team is up 2-0, we can close out the series and advance to the next round. But at the end of the day, you don't know what you're going to expect. You cannot predict the future. But in any situation we are in, we've got to find a way to win the game, win the game and find a solution to be better, play better and do it together, yeah.

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