
Notes from Today's Turner Sports 2017 NBA Conference Finals Media Conference Call Featuring Kenny Smith and Chris Webber

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

Click for audio of today's call: <http://bit.ly/2rno1TN>

TNT – in its 33rd consecutive year of NBA coverage – will exclusively present the **2017 NBA Eastern Conference Finals** – No. 1 seed **Boston Celtics** vs. defending NBA Champion **Cleveland Cavaliers** – beginning with **Game 1 tomorrow, Wednesday, May 17, at 8:30 p.m. ET** on TNT from **Boston**. Play-by-play announcer **Marv Albert** will call the series and be joined by analysts **Chris Webber** and **Reggie Miller** with reporters **David Aldridge** and **Kristen Ledlow**.

On site pregame, halftime and postgame coverage will be provided by the **Inside the NBA presented by Kia** studio team of **Ernie Johnson, Charles Barkley, Kenny Smith & Shaquille O'Neal** throughout the Eastern Conference Finals. **Baron Davis** will join Johnson, Smith and O'Neal for tomorrow's Game 1 coverage.

NBA Tip-Off presented by Autotrader pregame coverage will begin at **8 p.m.** each game night, except for a **special 90-minute show on Friday, May 19, beginning at 7 p.m. ahead of Game 2**. On Friday's show, the finalists for the **Kia NBA Most Valuable Player, Kia NBA Rookie of the Year, Kia NBA Defensive Player of the Year, Kia NBA Sixth Man Award, Kia NBA Most Improved Player** and **NBA Coach of the Year** will be unveiled. The winners will be announced during the first-ever **NBA Awards on TNT on Monday, June 26, at 9 p.m.**

Following postgame coverage of Games 1-4, TNT will air Season 2 of **The Dunk King presented by 5-hour ENERGY**, showcasing 24 of the top amateur dunkers from around the globe and a \$100,000 prize on the line.

Additionally, NBA TV – co-managed by the Turner Sports and the NBA – is the comprehensive destination for studio coverage throughout the playoffs, including on site at The Finals.

Earlier today, Turner Sports NBA analysts **Kenny Smith** and **Chris Webber** shared their insight on the upcoming NBA Playoffs:

Chris Webber on what the Cavaliers can do defensively to slow down Isaiah Thomas: “One is going to be the lineups by Head Coach [Tyronn] Lue - can you play small? When you play small, you can switch and you don't have to worry about keeping the ball out of [Thomas'] hands. Another way is trapping and you can't go by the trapping of [Washington], their big men are much different than the big men of Cleveland. Tristan [Thompson] and others can get out and double, look for the second pass to be denied. Isaiah is a great player and I expect him to get his points. I don't think you're going to see Cleveland trying to worry about stopping one player. You'll see a team focused... I think the way you go about it is to play team ball... They'll do it with their strategy – going small to switch. They have been great scorers in this league and you can still beat their teams. It's more about the system and can you make someone else make that shot, or if he's hot, can you continue to deny the other guys?”

Kenny Smith on how Boston will present challenges to Cleveland's offense during the series: “What really makes Cleveland good is the fact they can score the basketball like teams in the West and they make it easy to score. When they struggled and why they went 51-31 in the regular

season, at times, they got defended. There are teams that can defend them. If you look at the Celtics, when you say, 'What do Al Horford, Avery Bradley, Marcus Smart, Terry Rozier when he comes into the game, Kelly Olynyk do the best?' They all defend, they aren't scorers. The Boston Celtics have a lot of defense-first guys, which will make it much more difficult for Cleveland... They have guys who don't need as much help."

Webber on Cleveland's need to play high-level defense if they are to win the NBA

Championship: "I don't think people give J.R. Smith and Iman Shumpert enough credit on defense. They beat Golden State last year, when from my recollection many people in the media didn't give them a chance. It was because of the defense of those two guys, you can't stop [Stephen] Curry, you can't stop [Klay] Thompson and you can't stop Isaiah Thomas, but you have guys that are willing to be on that island - be vulnerable, be crossed over and those guys, the fact that they're willing to run through a wall, that's what I'm looking at... I believe they have flashes of defensive brilliance on their side... I want to see if they match the defensive intensity of Boston."

Smith on the Warriors being considered "villains" while the Cavs have not faced that same backlash despite both potentially going to their third straight NBA Finals: "When you go to the team that beat you, people aren't going to like it. Ray Allen wasn't liked by the Boston Celtics [when he went to Miami] and Kevin Durant was a better player at that stage than Ray Allen was when he went to Golden State. It left them open to [have the villain label]... LeBron, in his case, he came home, so the story is more compassionate. He had the same backlash when he went to Miami, but no one's ever going to question someone coming home... [The Warriors] put that on themselves and Kevin Durant knew the expectation that would happen... It is different than what great players in the past have done."

Webber on Cleveland's low defensive efficiency rating during the regular season: "We have to give LeBron credit for going to six straight NBA Finals... I think by them coming back from 3-1 last year, Cleveland has always said, 'We know what we have to do.' Now they haven't done it [on defense in the regular season], but they have a little more leeway because LeBron has been to six straight Championships. I think once the Playoffs started...knowing what they must do to win, I think they've made a concerted effort to get back to the kind of ball that Coach Lue wants them playing. That's why [Coach Lue] was frustrated; not that they didn't have the acumen or IQ, they were blaming it on something else not to execute. We've seen that effort and intensity go up and I think with that, when they play great defensively, they are really hard to stop. They've made a recommitment back on that defensive end, at least in the first two rounds... If you're a Cleveland fan, you have to be happy with how they've been playing defensively."

Smith on Cleveland's defensive struggles still being a concern despite back-to-back sweeps: "There was a reason why they only won 51 games in the regular season, but that has not been apparent in eight playoff games. If they fall back into any of that... sometimes a loss does that, it makes you go back into those bad habits that you do have as a team when you're losing. When they're winning, somehow they're able to block out bad habits, where the Spurs or Warriors, in wins and losses, don't show those bad habits. They play the same consistent way."

Webber on whether he expects a physical match-up between Kevin Love and Kelly Olynyk:

"I don't think they'll be thinking much about [what happened two years ago in the playoffs]. Kelly Olynyk had a great Game 7 [against Washington]... He's not a star player so he needs to focus on doing the little things. When you're a role player, you can't afford to have an alternative agenda, your only agenda is to play well, not to try to be very physical. Very frankly, this is for the stars and I expect Isaiah [Thomas] and other players who have done it all year to step up. [Olynyk] has to worry about Tristan Thompson, it can't be a one-on-one match-up."

Webber on Kyle Korver's impact on Cleveland's offense: "He changed everything by his presence on the floor. If he goes 0-for-8 from the three-point line and he's on the floor for the last two

minutes of the game, you respect him as though he's gone 8-for-8. It's his presence and reputation and spacing the floor."

Smith on the Warriors developing into a truly great team over the last three years: "The Warriors got good a couple of years ago... People thought they were pretty good, but they became the best team. Klay [Thompson] wasn't a child prodigy, Steph Curry was not a child prodigy, these guys have developed into that and won 73 games without Kevin Durant... There are teams that can do what Golden State has done - develop players into this system we see today."

Webber on the potential third consecutive Warriors/Cavaliers NBA Finals matchup: "It's the greatness of LeBron... I don't know what we could do about it except to really just enjoy it. When Magic [Johnson] and some other guys did it, we maybe talked about parity instead of enjoying it and we'll never see a guy like Magic Johnson again. We can change divisions, or try to do a bunch of things, but when you have great players like Curry and Durant on the same team, or a guy like LeBron, there's not much you can do. I love that we get to see this - a guy learn to win under Pat Riley and come home and show his team how to win... I just think it's the greatness of the players that we have."

Smith on how Draymond Green's game demonstrates that trash talking has evolved: "Guys use trash talk more for self-motivation than for stopping the opponent. Most guys, at the level we played, aren't affected by other people talking to them. With Green, I think it's self-motivating. His game is more of an energy game - when he's at his best, he's playing at a high level of energy. Other guys can play their best [without] being at that high-energy level. For me, what Green does is more self-motivating."

Webber on what Green brings as an emotional leader: "Knowing Draymond Green and his family as long as I've known him, I think the best thing that he has to offer is his heart. It's not talking or anything like that. Everybody gets caught up in how he yells at the refs, but they never see how when he yells at the refs, two plays later, he'll get a charge. I'd say [Kevin Durant's defensive improvement is owed to] being around Draymond Green. It's really hard to find a glue guy like that. When we look at Draymond Green's career...what really matters is his substance. That's him really playing, really coming through, showing the team that they can depend on him to do his job every day of being defensive-minded."

Smith on Carmelo Anthony's future: "[Madison Square Garden Chairman James] Dolan is going to have to choose [between Carmelo Anthony and Phil Jackson]. The decision is, as we know it, all Carmelo's. It's up to him to say, 'I want to be traded,' and where, and why. He does not have to [show his hand], because [the no-trade clause is] in his contract... That's what's really brewing in New York City, in my opinion. Carmelo or Phil, one of them has to go."

Webber on how market size no longer weighs as heavily for free agents as it once did: "Other players around the NBA are watching [the Knicks]. The largest cities that had an advantage before, no longer have that advantage because the Internet has been the great equalizer. It's going to be interesting to see how teams handle this once players speak out about where they'll go and won't go. New York was once of the most cherished places to play, and in talking to players and free agents today, I'm not sure if we'll continue to see that."