

D'Angelo Russell Serves As Lone Buckeye Representative In NBA Conference Finals



D'Angelo Russell is the last Buckeye standing in the NBA Playoffs.

Russell and the Los Angeles Lakers advanced to the Western Conference Finals on Friday after taking down the Golden State Warriors 122-101 to close out their Western Conference Semifinal in six games. The Lakers will take on the Denver Nuggets in the conference finals, with the series kicking off on Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Russell has been a key figure for the Lakers during their playoff run, starting in all 12 games while averaging 15.7 points and 5.0 assists per game and shooting 44.5 percent from the field and 34.7 percent from deep.

Despite aiding the Lakers in the postseason, Russell's season began with the Minnesota Timberwolves —where he played out the first 54 games of the season before being traded to Los Angeles on Feb. 8 in a three-team trade that also included former Ohio State guard Mike Conley Jr., who took over Russell's starting point guard spot in Minnesota.

Russell squared off against Conley and his former team in the NBA Play-In Tournament but struggled, only producing 2 points on 1-of-9 shooting, but the Lakers prevailed over the Timberwolves 108-102 in overtime to secure the No. 7 seed in the playoffs and an opening round series with the Memphis Grizzlies.

Russell was sharp against the Grizzlies, averaging 16.7 points and 5.8 assists per game while helping the Lakers deal the death blow to Memphis with a game-high 31 points in Los Angeles' 125-85 closeout win in Game 6 on April 28.

The Lakers advanced to take on the defending NBA champion Warriors, which served as another opportunity for revenge against a former team for Russell, who played for Golden State during the

2019-20 season. Russell saw his scoring and assists numbers dip to 14.7 points and 4.2 dimes per game against the Warriors, but shot 45.6 percent from the field — his best mark of the postseason. Russell's defining performance of the series came in Game 3, in which he produced 21 points and five assists while connecting on 5 of 8 three-point attempts to aid the Lakers to a 127-97 victory on May 6.

While Russell is the only player out of Ohio State to reach the conference finals this season, former Buckeye forward Chris Jent will also play a role in the series as an assistant coach for the Lakers.

When the Lakers take the floor against the Nuggets on Tuesday, it will mark Russell's first career appearance in the NBA conference finals.