

Raptors survive turnover trouble in Game 2 win over Nets, can't stick with up-tempo strategy

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TORONTO – When the Toronto Raptors looked across at their first-round opponents, the Brooklyn Nets, they saw two things: plenty of playoff experience and veteran savvy and an opportunity to exploit that by dictating the style of play.

The Raptors wanted to take advantage of their youth and athleticism and made a point of trying to play at a faster pace against Brooklyn's older stars. DeMar DeRozan scored 17 of his game-high 30 points in the fourth quarter to lead the Raptors to a [100-95 win](#) but Toronto turned the ball over 21 times in Game 2 after committing 19 turnovers in Game 1 and still failed to push Brooklyn into an up-and-down game.

"We're trying to play fast, especially against Brooklyn," said DeRozan. "Sometimes that may cause some costly turnovers, we understand that, but we still got to clean it up and limit it."

Part of the reason it hasn't been easy for the Raptors to establish and sustain an up-tempo game is that it's not something this group has done regularly. Toronto and Brooklyn were both bottom-10 teams in terms of pace of play this regular season – the Raptors averaged 94.4 possessions per game while the Nets were right behind them at 93.7. The first two games of this series the pace has been even slower than that, averaging 92 possessions per

game.

"That's a problem when you try to play faster than who you are. [We tried] and keep the tempo up and that's not easy for us to do. We kind of get a little frenetic," said head coach Dwane Casey. "Then when you get in the halfcourt, [you] get hit, bumped, grabbed, held. We've got to get adjusted to playing fast or in the half court and playing through contact, making the play and not turning it over."

During the regular season the Nets forced the second most turnovers per 100 possessions with 16.7 per 100, a product of their physical half-court defence. They're going to put the Raptors in uncomfortable positions regardless of the pace of the game.

"We need to clean up on our turnovers. It's something we definitely beat ourselves on," said Amir Johnson. "We have to go through the film and do whatever we've got to do to clean that up."

The pace of play typically slows down in the playoffs. Last year a playoff game averaged 92.7 possessions, while a regular season game was up at 94.2, putting an extra premium on each trip down the floor and in Game 2, the Nets did not make the most of their opportunities.

Paul Pierce and Deron Williams struggled from the field, combining to score 22 points on 7-for-26 shooting, and even though he was quiet in the fourth quarter, it was once again far too easy for Joe Johnson to get to the rim. Nine of his 13 field goal attempts came from inside the paint.

Pierce, Williams, and Kevin Garnett labeled the Game 2 loss as a missed opportunity, but they still feel like they're in a good position as the series shifts to Brooklyn for the next two games. They picked up a win on the road and stole home-court advantage from Toronto even though they have been far from their best.

For Toronto, they ensured they didn't drop both games at home and survived their turnover troubles.

It's a small sample size but the playoffs don't allow for much time to react. This time of year calls for quick decisions and this should be an easy one to make: the Raptors need to abandon the idea of trying to push the ball and go beat Brooklyn at their own game.

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