

DeMar DeRozan, Dwane Casey can relish Raptors' Game 5 win

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TORONTO – Dwane Casey made the smart, reasonable pregame adjustment, inserting Patrick Patterson into the Raptors' starting lineup in place of Luis Scola. DeMar DeRozan took the court, slowly worked his way into a rhythm, and finally looked like his All-Star self for the first time in this first-round series.

And for the first 41 1/2 minutes of Tuesday night's Game 5, it didn't look like either development was going to matter one bit.

The progress would be completely forgotten with a loss; a loss that would send the Raptors' season to the brink; a season that was supposed to be different than the last two.

For as good as DeRozan was, Paul George was even better. George Hill's hot shooting carried over from Game 4. Rookie big man Myles Turner flashed his offensive potential, further justifying Frank Vogel's decision to make him a starter in that Game 4 win.

The Pacers were rolling and it felt like it was all coming crashing down in Toronto. There was nothing Casey or DeRozan could do about it.

Minutes before tip off Casey stood at centre court and [received an award](#) for being the NBA coach who "best combined co-operation with the media and fans with excellence on the court" this season. It's a richly deserved honour. Really, the only complaint the media might file about Casey is his reticence to disclose any potential lineup changes ahead of games. No one expected that to change with the stakes as high as they were heading into Game 5.

"Who said it's going to be different? I don't know," Casey said less than two hours prior to tip when asked if he might consider changing his starting five. "I'm always [a coach] that doesn't like to break up the second unit, at any time."

Casey didn't have anyone fooled this time, though. Patterson was indeed with the starters when the game began, a reactive move made to avoid a repeat of Game 4 where Indiana jumped out to an early lead the Raptors couldn't erase. Even a coach as reliant on a set structure as Casey came to realize he had to go with Patterson over Scola.

It didn't work. The Pacers led 35-20 at the end of the first quarter. It felt like the Raptors were running out of options.

"I thought it would give us some speed and quickness to start the game so we got to reevaluate that," said Casey. "I love Pat, he gives us so much. I don't know if starting him messed up his rhythm, but he's a very valuable piece coming off the bench."

DeRozan had six points in the first, but at least he was attacking the basket. He kept at it and his confidence and comfort grew, scoring 13 more in the second for 19 at the half. George was matching him shot for shot, though, and then some, and the Pacers All-Star's 22 points had Indiana in front 61-52 at halftime.



DeRozan had 10 points in the third. But George had 15 off his game-high 39 to push the Pacers' lead to 90-77 entering the fourth quarter.

Casey opened the fourth with DeRozan on the floor alongside Kyle Lowry, Cory Joseph, Norman Powell, and Bismack Biyombo. It was an unorthodox lineup to be sure, but with George on the bench, the Raptors started to slowly but surely chip away at the deficit.

Thirteen became 11. Then down to 10, and nine, and seven, and five. The Pacers scored to return their lead to seven but Toronto came right back with a Joseph layup and a Terrence Ross three to whittle it down to two.

They would close it out in style. Powell's steal and emphatic slam with 6:31 remaining tied the game 92-92. DeRozan – who else on this night? – canned a three-pointer for three of his 34 points to put the Raptors up 95-92. After stopping Indiana on the defensive end, DeRozan assisted Joseph's three that made it 98-92 for Toronto.

"It was about mixing, finding, and searching for our group that was going to do that because we weren't getting that in the first three quarters," said Casey. "This is how you make a name for yourself. This is how you build legacies for yourself individually is in the playoffs, so why hold back?"

Casey and DeRozan still had to sweat it out until the very last second. Solomon Hill's game-tying three-point attempt swished, but the ball left his hand a fraction of a second too late, confirming a pivotal [102-99 win](#) for the Raptors and giving them a 3-2 lead in the series.

"I felt like my normal self. It's all about patience. You can't get flustered and you have to stay the course. That's what we want to continue to do. Whatever it takes to win," said DeRozan. "We mixed up a couple things [offensively] to try and get me easier shots, a couple good sets. We tried to speed up the tempo a little bit and it worked in our favour."

DeRozan is the only player that's been on the Raptors' roster for every one of Casey's five years in charge. They've been the constant as the franchise has gone from being a punch line to one believed to have a puncher's chance at a championship. DeRozan and Casey both answered the call in Game 5. And it'll all be forgotten if they lose Game 6 on Friday in Indiana. Such is life in the playoffs.

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