

WNBA

Sparks need another big defensive effort in Game 2

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MINNEAPOLIS – If the Los Angeles Sparks are going to take a 2-0 lead in the WNBA Finals, they might look to again shut down Maya Moore and Seimone Augustus.

The two averaged a little more than 30 points per game combined during the regular season and 36 in the playoffs coming into the best-of-five Finals.

In Game 1, Moore was held scoreless in the first half before putting up 18 second-half points. Augustus scored six as the Lynx lost 78-76 on Alana Beard's buzzer beater Sunday.

Sparks coach Brian Agler said it took a three-player effort to fight Moore defensively.

Alana Beard wasn't first option, but best one for Sparks

"It's not an easy task," Agler said of shutting down Moore. "You sort of have to have a team concept to try to corral her a little bit."

The Sparks could use another solid game from league MVP Nneka Ogwumike. She shot 8-for-9 from the floor and scored 19 points.

For the Lynx to get back into the series, they will need to cut down on turnovers and not get into foul trouble. The Sparks scored 18 points off 15 Lynx turnovers and scored 19 from the free throw line.

Game 1 wasn't the cleanest for the Lynx offensively either, according to Minnesota coach Cheryl Reeve, in terms of passing, cutting and moving.

"A lot of our passes were deflected, which you can't do," Reeve said.

It definitely showed in the team's 76-point output, considering they entered game averaging a league-best 97 points per game in the playoffs.

If anything is on Minnesota's side, it's experience. The Lynx are 33-15 all-time in the postseason and in the Finals for a league-record fifth time. Four of their players have played in five of the past six Finals.

First game of WNBA finals ends in ridiculous game-winning buzzer-beater

Being down 1-0, however, isn't new territory for Lynx veterans such as guard Lindsay Whalen.

"You regroup, you see what you can do to recover and get back for Tuesday night," Whalen said.

Agler knows how important the next game is for the Lynx.

"Moving forward to Tuesday, we have to make sure we keep our same focus and same energy out there on the floor because we know that they're a hungry team," Agler said. "They're trying to make history, and they're going to come after it."