

Magic, Spurs advance as Rockets stay alive

CHICAGO (AP) — The first time, Michael Jordan ended an era himself. This time, the Orlando Magic ended it for him.

Shaquille O'Neal and Anfernee Hardaway, two young players who emerged as marquee names during Jordan's 21-month retirement, led the Orlando Magic to a 108-102 victory Thursday night that eliminated the Chicago Bulls from the playoffs.

Nick Anderson, a Chicago kid who grew up idolizing Jordan, got the best of his hero down the stretch as the Magic scored the final 14 points after trailing 102-94 with less than three minutes to play.

O'Neal had 27 points and Hardaway 21 for Orlando, which will meet the winner of the Indiana-New York series in the Eastern Conference finals.

It was the earliest postseason exit since 1988 for Jordan, who carried the Bulls to NBA titles the next three seasons before leaving in his prime, only to return exactly two months ago with his simple and dramatic "I'm back."

Horace Grant, the steady but underappreciated power forward who left the Bulls as a free agent after last season, dislocated a finger during the game. He was lifted onto his teammates' shoulders after the buzzer as the rest of the Magic's players and coaches celebrated in deathly quiet United Center.

Pippen and B.J. Armstrong, Chicago's two championship-era holdovers besides Jordan, also made crucial mistakes in the closing minutes.

Jordan finished with 24 points on 8-of-19 shooting. Jordan, who professed love for the old Chicago Stadium and disdain for the United Center, never made more shots than he missed in any game at the new \$175 million palace.

Pippen had 26 points and 12 rebounds but couldn't keep the Bulls from losing the sixth game of a playoff series at home for the first time since May 11, 1975.

Scott added 21 points and Anderson 18 for the Magic. **Houston 116, Phoenix 103**

HOUSTON (AP) — The Houston Rockets still weren't ready to give up. Hakeem Olajuwon wouldn't let them.

Olajuwon scored 30 points and Houston's sharpshooters scored 15 straight fourth-quarter points on 3-pointers as the Rockets, trying to become the fifth team to recover from a 3-1 deficit, defeated Phoenix 116-103 Thursday night.

That tied the Western Conference semifinal at 3-3, with Game 7 on Saturday at Phoenix.

Trailing 84-83 with 35 seconds to go in the third quarter, the Rockets went on an 18-5 charge that carried over into the fourth period and gave them a

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101-89 lead with 5:32 left.

Olajuwon, who had nine points in the fourth quarter, then turned the game over to the Rockets' 3-point shooters and they hit four in a row, starting with Mario Elie, who had two in the burst that kept alive the Rockets' hopes of defending their NBA title.

Sam Cassell also hit two 3-pointers and Robert Horry got one.

Only four teams in NBA history have recovered to win a playoff series after trailing 3-1. Boston did it in 1968 and 1981, both times against Philadelphia, the Los Angeles Lakers overcame Phoenix in 1970 and Washington in 1979 against San Antonio.

Charles Barkley, with sub-performances in Games 3 and 5, hit his first 10 shots and finished the half with 27 points as the Suns led 58-55. But Barkley took only two shots in the fourth quarter and finished with 34 points.

Wesley Persons added 15 points for Phoenix. Clyde

Drexler, still recovering from the flu, scored 20 for the Rockets.

The third quarter went back and forth until the Rockets started their charge, pulling to an 87-84 advantage on four points by Drexler in the final 23 seconds. Drexler had a three-point play with 23 seconds left and hit 1-of-2 free throws following a loose-ball foul on Kevin Johnson with two seconds showing.

Each team made a run in the second quarter. The Rockets missed five of their first six shots to start the quarter and Phoenix took advantage with a 12-2 burst. The Rockets came back with an 8-0 run to lead 45-44.

San Antonio 100, Los Angeles 88 INGLEWOOD, Calif. (AP) — Form prevailed Thursday night as the San Antonio Spurs advanced to the Western Conference finals for the first time in 12 years and the Los Angeles Lakers ran out of miracles.

The Spurs, whose 62-20 regular-season record was the best in the NBA, used a 16-2 run late in the third quarter to go ahead for good in beating the Lakers 100-88 to win the best-of-7 second-round playoff series 4-2.

David Robinson led the Spurs with 31 points and 15 rebounds. He scored 12 of his team's final 14 points. The Lakers scored only six points during that time.

Sean Elliott added 26 points and Dennis Rodman, back in the

starting lineup after a two-game absence, had 12 points and 16 rebounds. Avery Johnson had 13 points and 11 assists for San Antonio.

Elden Campbell led the Lakers with 21 points and eight rebounds. Cedric Ceballos added 16 points, and Nick Van Exel and Vlade Divac had 13 points each for Los Angeles. Van Exel also had 11 assists.

The Spurs, 47-8 since Jan. 24, will meet the winner of Saturday's Houston-Phoenix game in the Western Conference finals. The Rockets beat the Suns 116-103 earlier Thursday night to force a seventh game in that series.

The Spurs lost two straight games only five times this season and never lost three straight. So it was no surprise they rebounded from a 98-96 overtime loss to the Lakers in Game 5 at the Alamodome on Tuesday night, a game decided by Van Exel's 3-pointer with a half-second to play.

The Lakers led only twice in the game — both times in the third quarter.

They took their first lead on a layup by Ceballos with 4:58 left in the period, making it 62-61. It was 64-63 when the Spurs began taking charge.

The series victory was the first ever for the Spurs in five tries against the Lakers.

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