

Rockets end home-court jinx, take West finals

HOUSTON (AP) — Hakeem Olajuwon and Robert Horry finally put an end to the home-court madness in the West, and the Houston Rockets are headed back to the NBA Finals.

Olajuwon had 39 points, 17 rebounds and five blocks as the Rockets beat San Antonio 100-95 Thursday night to win the Western Conference finals 4-2.

Horry sank six 3-pointers, the last with 1:58 to play to put the defending champions ahead 97-93, then clinched the victory by making two free throws with 13 seconds to play. He scored 22 points.

It took six tries, but a home team finally won in the Western Conference finals.

Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich leaped in the air at the final buzzer, and the team and crowd rushed onto the court.

The crowd had been shouting "MVP, MVP" throughout the

game for Olajuwon, last year's most valuable player who consistently outplayed David Robinson in this series.

Robinson, this season's MVP, scored 19 for San Antonio but missed two free throws and committed a fatal turnover in the final 1:06. Avery Johnson had 19 points and 10 assists for the Spurs. Sean Elliott scored 18.

Dennis Rodman had 14 points and 17 rebounds for the Spurs, who had felt anything but a title would be a disappointment after they won 62 games during the regular season, the best record in the league.

The Rockets open the NBA Finals on Wednesday against Orlando or Indiana on the home court of the Eastern Conference champions. But that shouldn't bother Houston, which didn't have the home-court edge in any of the first three rounds.



Houston, which finished sixth in the West, ties the 1981 Rockets as the lowest seeded team to reach the finals.

Houston won three games in San Antonio in the conference finals before breaking through with a victory at home. But, as usual, the Rockets couldn't do it the easy way.

After Drexler stole Robinson's pass and found Mario Elie for a layup with 5:56 to play, Houston led 92-83.

The packed house at the Summit, which hadn't had much to cheer about in two straight losses

to the Spurs in Houston, was deafening.

But Doc Rivers, who was in the NBA Finals a year ago with the New York Knicks, brought San Antonio back.

He scored seven during a 10-0 run. Robinson capped the rally by making one of two free throws to put the Spurs ahead 93-92 with 2:42 remaining.

Robinson drew his fifth foul with 9:48 to play, went to the bench, but came back for what probably were the most miserable 6 minutes, 15 seconds of his career.

Drexler, who came to his hometown of Houston in a Valentine's Day trade to join Olajuwon, his old Phi Slama Jama college teammate, in the dream of winning his first title, made two free throws to put the Rockets ahead for good 94-93 with 2 minutes to play.

Robinson, who was just 6-for-17 from the field, 0-for-3 in the final quarter, missed inside, then Horry made his final 3-pointer to make it 97-93.

Discounting Horry, the rest of the Rockets were 2-for-19 from 3-point range.

Robinson missed two free throws with 1:06 remaining. After Sam Cassell made one of two free throws, Rodman's rebound basket with 28 seconds to go kept San Antonio's fading hopes alive. But Rodman fouled Horry, who made both free throws.

Olajuwon made 7-of-8 field goals and scored 15 in the third quarter but it wasn't enough to bury the Spurs. Chuck Person's eight-footer to start the fourth quarter put San Antonio ahead 77-76. No team led by more than five points until Houston 8-0 surge put the Rockets up 84-77 with 9:48 remaining.

THURSDAY'S TRANSACTIONS

BASEBALL

AL

■ CHICAGO WHITE SOX—Purchased the contract of John Kruk, first baseman, from Nashville of the American Association. Designated Chris Sabo, third baseman, for assignment.

NL

■ NEW YORK METS—Named David Cohen legal counsel.
■ ST. LOUIS CARDINALS—Agreed to terms with Scott Cooper, third baseman, on a one-year contract.

MID-AMERICA LEAGUE

■ ANDERSON LAWYERS—Signed Dustin Riggs and Dean Morehead, pitchers.

BASKETBALL

U.S. BASKETBALL LEAGUE

■ ATLANTA TROJANS—Signed and activated Rob Renfro, center. Activated Anthony Stanford, guard, from the taxi squad. Placed Ivano Newbill, center, and Robert Shannon, guard, on the taxi squad.
■ MEMPHIS FIRE—Signed Marvin Alexander, forward, and placed him on the taxi squad.

FOOTBALL

NFL

■ LOS ANGELES RAIDERS—Signed Napoleon Kaufman, running back.
■ NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS—Re-signed Dwayne Sabb, linebacker.
■ PHILADELPHIA EAGLES—Re-signed

Tommy Jeter, defensive back, to a one-year contract. Canadian Football League

■ CALGARY STAMPEDERS—Signed Stu Laird, defensive tackle, to a one-year contract.

■ SAN ANTONIO TEXANS—Signed Mick Rossley, wide receiver; Kendall Rhine, linebacker; Larry Davis, defensive tackle; and Marcus Gates, defensive back.

■ WINNIPEG BLUE BOMBERS—Signed Lester Weaver and Shannon Garrett, defensive backs; Virgil Gardner, quarterback, and Ante Skorput, guard.

ARENA FOOTBALL LEAGUE

■ CONNECTICUT COYOTES—Signed Jim Panther, lineman.

■ IOWA BARNSTORMERS—Traded Reggie Robinson, wide receiver-defensive back, to Orlando for Jason Kuipers, lineman.

■ LAS VEGAS STING—Signed Johnny Feinga, lineman, and placed him on the refused-to-report list.

■ MIAMI HOOTERS—Placed Donald Brown, defensive specialist, on injured reserve.

■ ORLANDO PREDATORS—Traded Jason Kuipers, lineman, to Iowa for Reggie Robinson, wide receiver-defensive back. Placed Bobby Samuels, defensive specialist, on recallable waivers.

■ ST. LOUIS STAMPEDE—Signed Calvin Shakoor, wide receiver-defensive back. Placed Mike Collins, defensive specialist, on injured reserve.

HOCKEY

COLONIAL HOCKEY LEAGUE

■ QUAD CITY MALLARDS—Named Brad Buetow coach; Patrick Doyle assistant general manager; Karl Spring marketing director; and Jim Cox director of broadcasting.

SOCCER

■ MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER—Signed Jeff Duback, goalkeeper; Mike Lapper, Curt Onalfo and Tom Soehn, defenders; and Chad Ashton, forward.

COLLEGE

■ ATLANTIC COLLEGIATE BASEBALL LEAGUE—Named Robert H. Pertsas commissioner and Henry Burke president.

■ CAL STATE-HAYWARD—Named Gary Stewart men's basketball coach.

■ EAST CAROLINA—Named Ginny Doyle women's assistant basketball coach.

■ FLORIDA—Announced Jason Anderson, guard, has been dismissed from the basketball team for attitude problems.

■ NORTHWESTERN STATE, LA.—Named J.D. Barnett athletic director, effective June 1996.

■ QUINNIPAC—Announced the addition of women's field hockey for the 1995-96 academic year. Named Becca Main women's field hockey coach.

■ ST. ANSELME—Named Bob Kerrigan baseball coach.

■ WEST VIRGINIA—Named Ed Dickson tennis coach, effective August 1.

■ WOOSTER—Named Dean Paul assistant football coach.

Cowboys may ditch double-star uniforms

DALLAS (AP) — Those double-star jerseys the Dallas Cowboys unveiled last season may be forced to go the way of leather helmets. Or, the team could be unpacking their "unlucky" traditional blue outfits for good.

That may be the decision Cowboys owner Jerry Jones must make to comply with a league policy limiting the number of clothing changes teams can make next season.

"The policy for this year is teams will wear only two uniforms," NFL spokesman Greg Aiello said. "This applies to all teams, including the Cowboys."

When Jones brought out the double-star jerseys last year, he claimed they never would replace the team's traditional home white uniform.

So, assuming that outfit will be one of the two choices, Jones must decide whether to eliminate the traditional blue road outfits or his new double-star creation.

The seldom-worn blue shirts were once considered to be jinxed because the Cowboys had a bad record while wearing them. Actually, they usually were only forced to use them when playing difficult opponents.

The Washington Redskins, for example, would shelve their maroon and yellow uniforms when Dallas came to town just to make the Cowboys wear the blue outfits.

Jones had hoped to use new double-star jerseys for "special occasions" such as the playoffs. He also saw the outfits as another way for the team to market itself, and the items were hot sellers around Christmas last year.

Jones actually had four uniforms planned for this season: the white and blue traditional jerseys, the white double-star and a new blue double-star that was created this off-season.

Exploding car minimized injuries to injured driver Fox

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Stan Fox's race car did just what it was supposed to do when it slammed almost head-on into the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's concrete wall: It exploded into thousands of fragments in a violent shower of debris.

It also probably saved his life.

"There are features that are built into the cars to try and have the driver protected," said Dr. Kenneth L. Renkens, a neurosurgeon who removed a blood clot from Fox's brain shortly after the first-lap crash in Sunday's Indianapolis 500.

"A helmet alone can't protect you from a brain injury, but the idea is you let some other mechanical device suffer the impact," Renkens said at Methodist Hospital on Wednesday.

"In the case of cars, the cars disintegrate, or come apart, so they are the vehicle that absorbs the shock to protect the individual. In the case of helmets, the way that helmets are designed, you let the helmet suffer the impact, and it takes the pressure off the brain and the skull itself."

Fox remained in critical but stable condition today. He still has not regained consciousness, and the treatment now is to prevent swelling, which could cause secondary injury, Renkens said Wednesday.

He said there were encouraging signs.

"Initially, when he was seen at the track and evaluated there, he was totally unresponsive," Renkens said. "His condition has improved with regard to that. The

longer that we go along with his treatment where we don't have problems with increased pressure and brain swelling. I think the more encouraging it is.

"He seems to be responding to pain and seems to be grimacing a little bit in response to that."

Aside from the design of the car and helmet, Renkens said, quick medical attention also played a part.

"The fact that he had this injury and was immediately given oxygen, transported, evaluated, had a tremendous impact," Renkens said. "When people are involved in collisions with head injuries out on the road, you can imagine the amount of time it takes for the accident to be discovered and all that time if they are without oxygen or have a head injury that's untreated, it's to their detriment. The sooner you can treat the problem, the better the outcome you can expect."

But he said it may take several more days to determine the extent of Fox's brain injury.

"In general, with high acceleration impacts, the fibers that are running between the brain cells themselves and the rest of the body can be injured. They can either be damaged beyond repair; they can be mildly damaged where they are just not functioning; and the mildest form of it is sort of a concussion, where it's a transient event and people regain consciousness very early."

He said it was too soon to tell where Fox fits into that range of possibilities.

"If it's an injury where the cells are partially damaged but not completely damaged and they will recover func-

tion, then improvements will be made," Renkens said.

Normally it takes five to seven days after the injury to determine the extent of damage, he said.

Renkens said the blow to the head was the only injury to Fox in the crash just seconds after the start of the race. Fox, of Janesville, Wis., was making his eighth start at the Speedway and apparently ran over the rumble strips on the inside of the first turn. His car veered sharply to the right, struck the outside wall almost head-on and was broadsided by Eddie Cheever's car.

Six cars were knocked out of the race because of the collision or from debris from the crash. Fox was awarded 30th place.

Renkens said the source of the injury still wasn't known.

"That's being reviewed right now to see if it was the effect of the impact against the wall or whether there was some other piece of debris from the track that struck him in the head," the doctor said.

Sandy Campbell, a spokeswoman for Hemelgarn Racing, read a note from Fox's wife, Jean, who thanked race fans from all over the country for their "overwhelming concern and best wishes for Stan's condition."

"Your kindness has been a great strength and comfort to all of those close to Stan. His family is at his bedside and remains cautiously optimistic for a full recovery from any injuries he received from doing what he loved most: racing in the Indianapolis 500," the note from Jean Fox read.