

Late run gives red-hot Wings 3-2 frozen pond win

DETROIT (AP) — Too late, Detroit goaltender Mike Vernon spotted the puck coming out of a crowd of players.

But the Red Wings got a break when the puck caromed off the post and the game ended, giving them a 2-0 lead Sunday over the Chicago Blackhawks in the Western Conference finals.

The Red Wings scored two late goals, including Kris Draper's with 1:45 remaining, for a 3-2 victory.

"I couldn't see the guy with the puck," Vernon said. "I was looking for it."

Tony Amonte fired the shot from near the Chicago blue line. As the puck sailed through the air, Vernon remained frozen outside the crease.

"I knew the shot would be coming," Vernon said. "I knew I was outside my crease. I was just trying to hold my ground. When I finally saw the puck, I sort of kicked

at it with my pad. I missed it.

"I saw it hit the post. Yep, I saw that."

It marked the first time all season the Blackhawks had failed to hold a lead going into the third period. Chicago was 19-0-0 during the abbreviated season when leading after two and 5-0-0 in the playoffs.

But the Blackhawks, who dominated the second period, gave up two third-period goals. Detroit outshot Chicago 13-3 in the final period and 38-20 for the game.

"We just have to be more assertive," Chicago forward Joe Murphy said. "We can't stand around watching all their best players."

Draper, who had just two goals during the season, scored his third of the playoffs on the rebound of a shot by Nicklas Lidstrom. The puck bounced off goalie Ed Belfour's glove, right to the stick of Draper.

"As soon as I saw the water bottle move, I took off, and just waited for someone to catch up with me so I could celebrate," Draper said. "That was the most important goal of my life."

Belfour was pulled for an extra attacker with 54 seconds remaining.

"Eddie played a hell of a game," Chicago coach Darryl Sutter said. "They had a lot of close-in chances early, and he kept us in the game."

Chris Chelios and Amonte both had unassisted goals for Chicago. Dino Ciccarelli and Doug Brown scored for the Red Wings.

Games 3 and 4 of the best-of-7 series will be played in Chicago on Tuesday and Thursday.

"We know we can come back, because we were down 2-0 to Toronto, too," Sutter said.

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Magic muscles its way to Finals

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — In the Magic's noisy kingdom, nothing bad ever seems to happen to the home team.

And now Shaquille O' Neal and Anfernee Hardaway, the Orlando Magic's two 23-year-old stars, are taking their talent and youthful exuberance to the NBA Finals.

O' Neal scored 25 points Sunday night to lead the Magic to a 105-81 rout of the Indiana Pacers in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals.

Orlando's considerable talent and poise will be tested by the Houston Rockets, a team that rode its experience and toughness to the finals for the second straight year. The Rockets will defend their title beginning Wednesday in Orlando.

Just as they promised they would, the Magic shrugged off Friday night's 27-point disaster in Indianapolis and used a hot-shooting third quarter to bury the Pacers and take a 19-point lead into the final period.

The fourth quarter was never close, thanks to a shower of 3-pointers, three by Dennis Scott and one by Hardaway. Scott's trey with 4:34 left made it 96-72.

Scott finished with 19 points on 7-of-11 shooting. Hardaway added 17 and Horace Grant added 16.

Reggie Miller, whose 36 points in Game 6 was the reason the Pacers were here in the first place, had only 12 and missed 8 of 13 shots. He left the game for good with 3:53 to play.

Dale Davis led Indiana with 15 points and 14 rebounds. Rik Smits had just 10 points in 24 minutes.

The Magic, in their sixth season, reached the finals after playing only 20 postseason games. The last team to make such a rapid rise was the 1976-77 Portland Trail Blazers, who rolled all the way to the title.

Because Indiana could not win a single game away from its home court, the Pacers' season ended the way it did last year, with a loss on an opponent's home court in a seventh game of the conference finals. Last season, it was a four-point loss to the New York Knicks, the team Indiana beat to get to this series.

They never recovered from their third-quarter shooting woes and got more and more rattled as shots bounced off the rim

and the Magic got baskets in transition.

The Magic were so good, not even going 10-of-24 from the free throw line bothered them, mainly because they made 57 percent of their field goals.

Hardaway's defense led the way in Orlando's 20-5 spurt early in the third quarter had the Pacers down by 18 points with 4:48 left in the period. He went after every loose ball, triggering several fast-break baskets as the Magic hit eight of their first nine shots in the quarter.

The Magic made 11-of-17 shots in the period, building their lead to 80-61 before Byron Scott hit two free throws to end the quarter.

The Magic hit six 3-pointers in the first half, and their fourth of the first quarter gave them a 27-16 lead. The Pacers then outscored Orlando 14-3 to move ahead, but a cold spell allowed the Magic to take a 52-45 edge at halftime.

O' Neal had 17 points before going to the bench late in the half with two fouls. Smits picked up his second late in the first quarter and played only nine minutes in the half.

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